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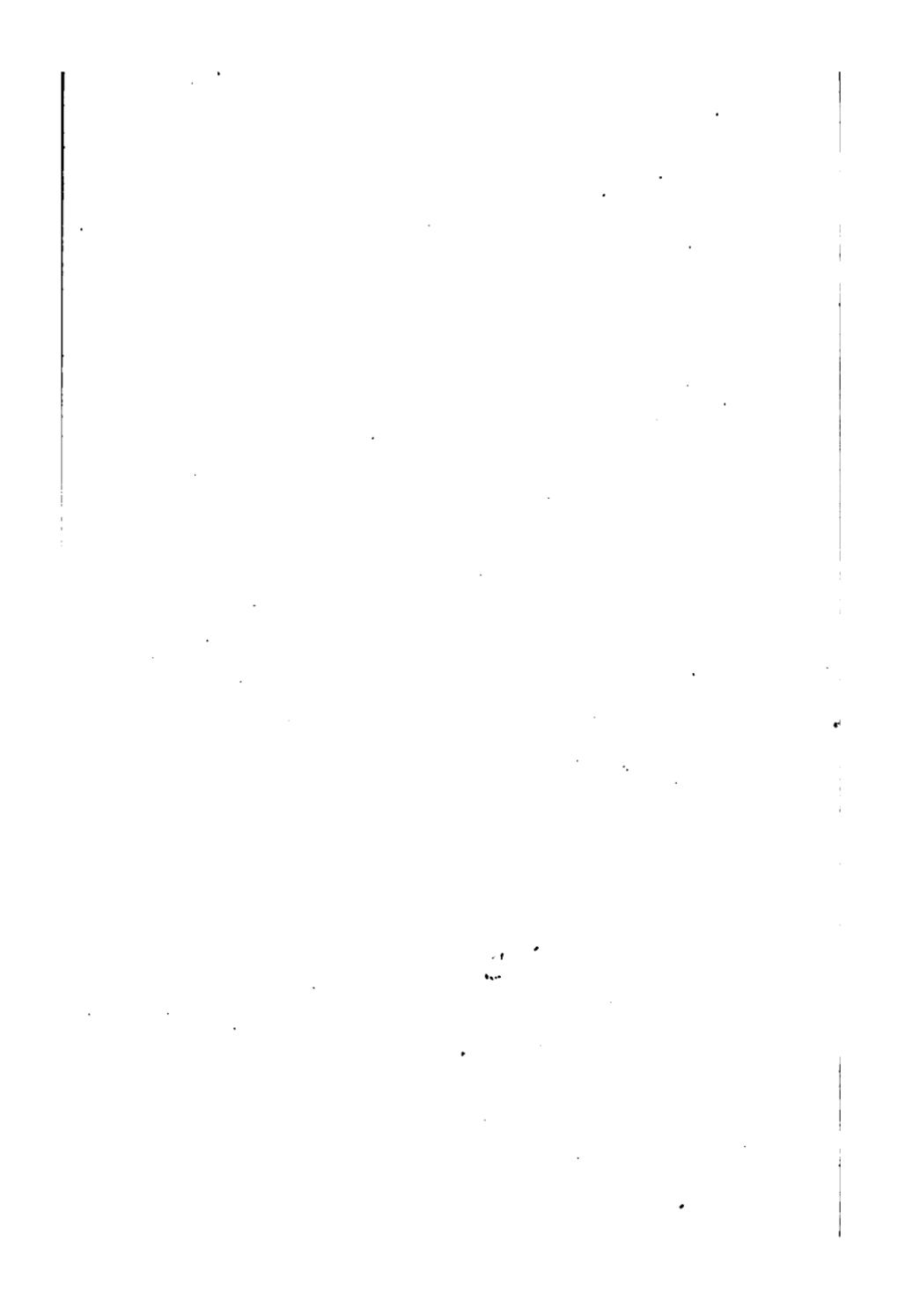
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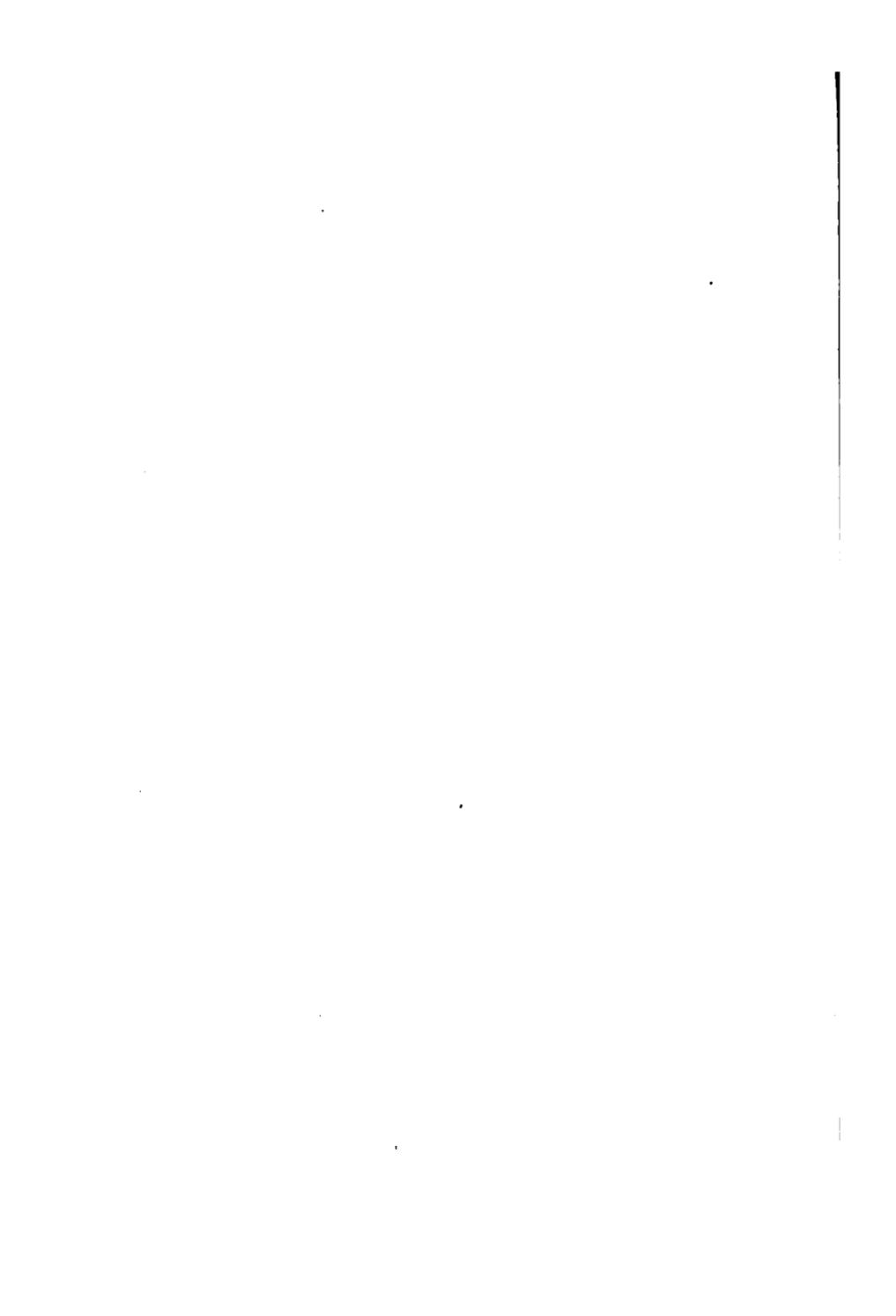








KOSSOVO.



KOSSOVO:

AN ATTEMPT TO BRING
SERBIAN NATIONAL SONGS,
ABOUT THE FALL OF THE SERBIAN EMPIRE
AT THE BATTLE OF KOSSOVO,
INTO
ONE POEM.

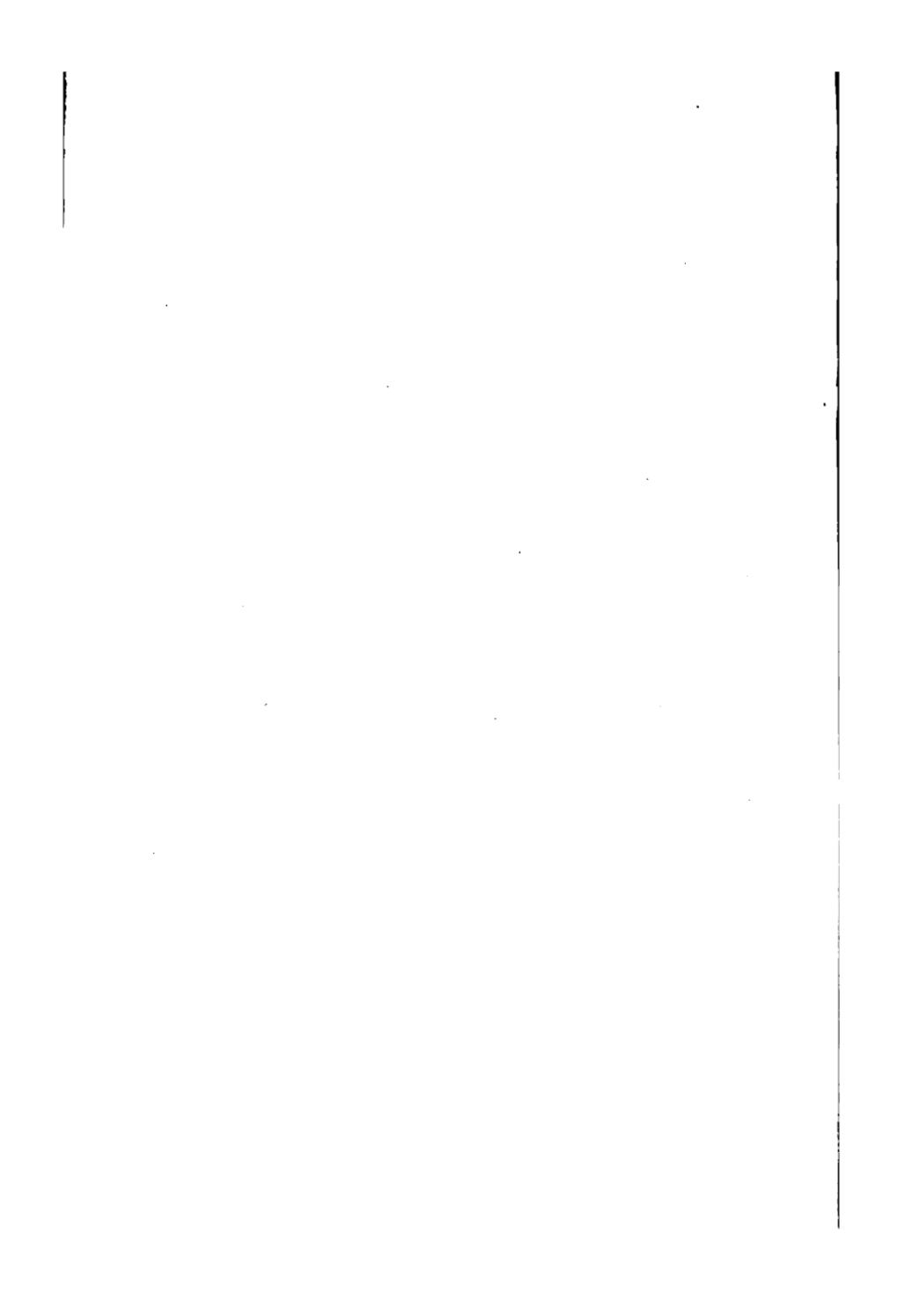
TRANSLATED AND ARRANGED
BY
MADAME ELODIE LAWTON MIJATOVICH,
AUTHOR OF "AIMEE, THE STORY OF A LIFE;" "CARINE STEINBURGH;"
"HISTORY OF MODERN SERBIA;" "SERBIAN FOLK-LORE,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

LONDON
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1881



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TO HER HIGHNESS
N A T H A L I E,
PRINCESS OF SERBIA.

MADAM,

Your Highness having graciously expressed to me the pleasure you would have in accepting any dedication I might desire to offer you, I avail myself now, respectfully and gratefully, of your Highness's most flattering confidence.

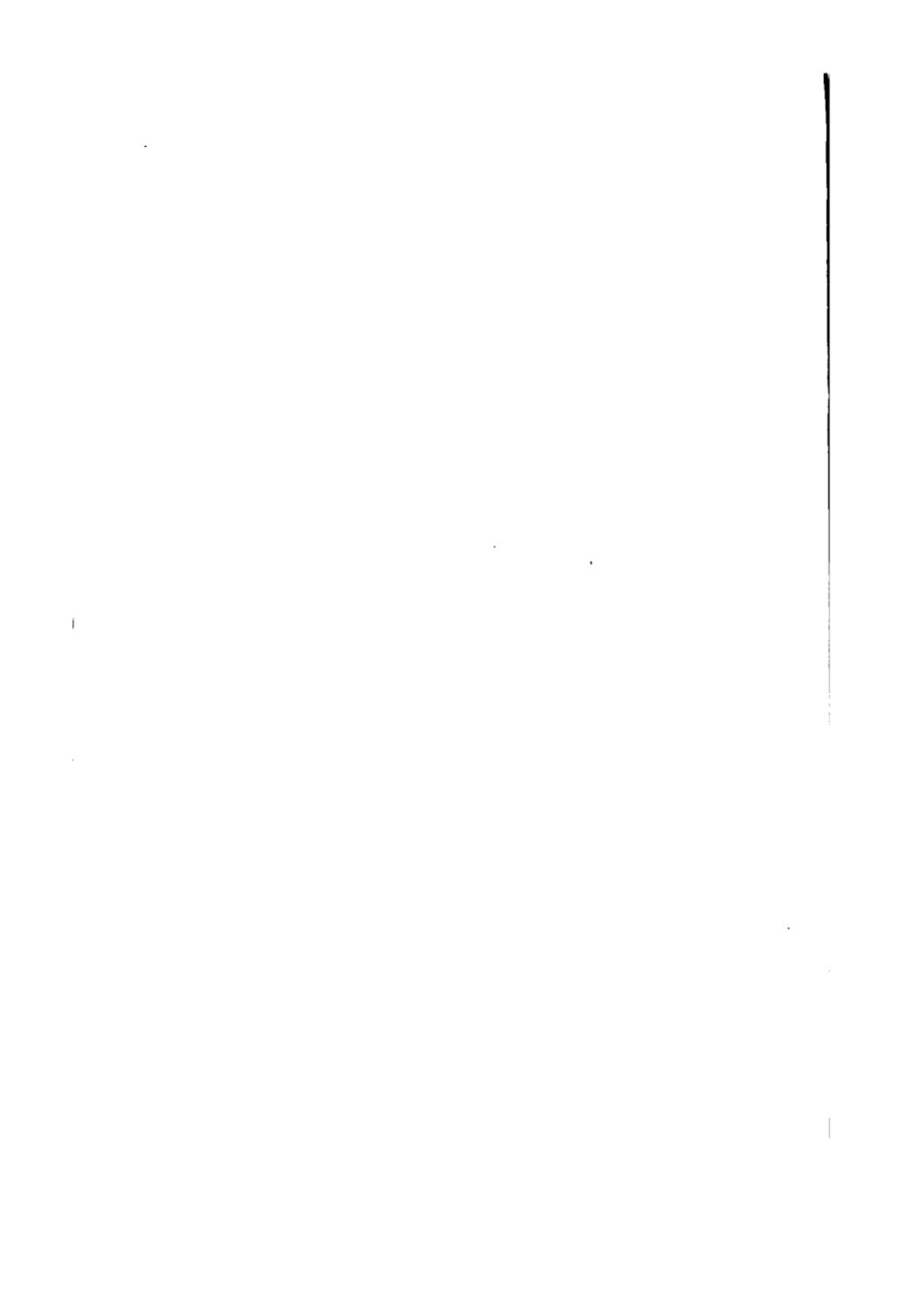
It seems to me most fitting that a poem in which the *last* Empress of mediæval Serbia fills such a sympathetic place, should be dedicated to the *first* Princess of the Independent Serbia of our times, to a Princess who holds so high a place in the hearts of her people.

I have the honour to remain,

Madam,

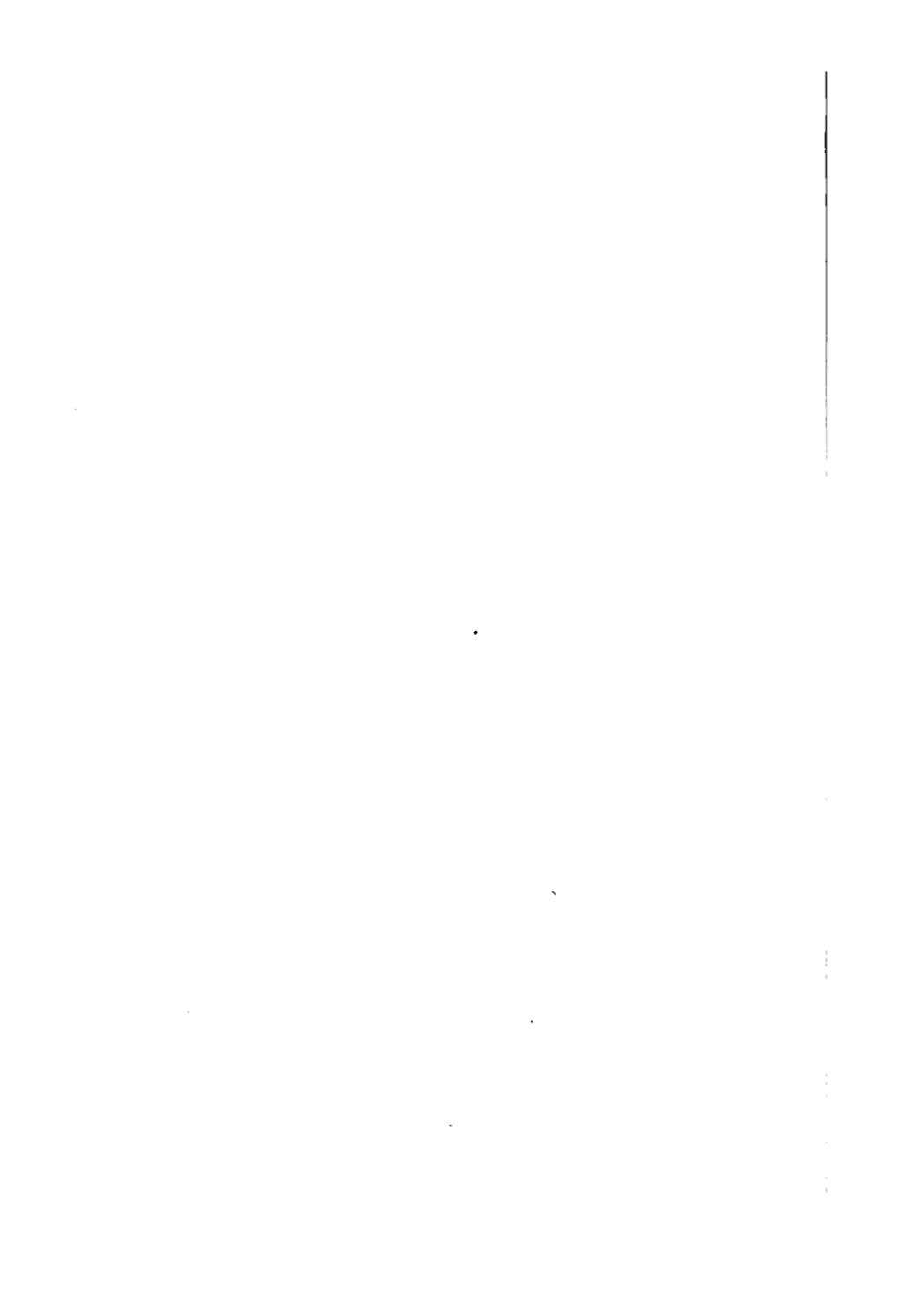
Your Highness's most respectful and obliged,
ELODIE LAWTON MIJATOVICH.

BELGRADE,
Palm Sunday, 1881.

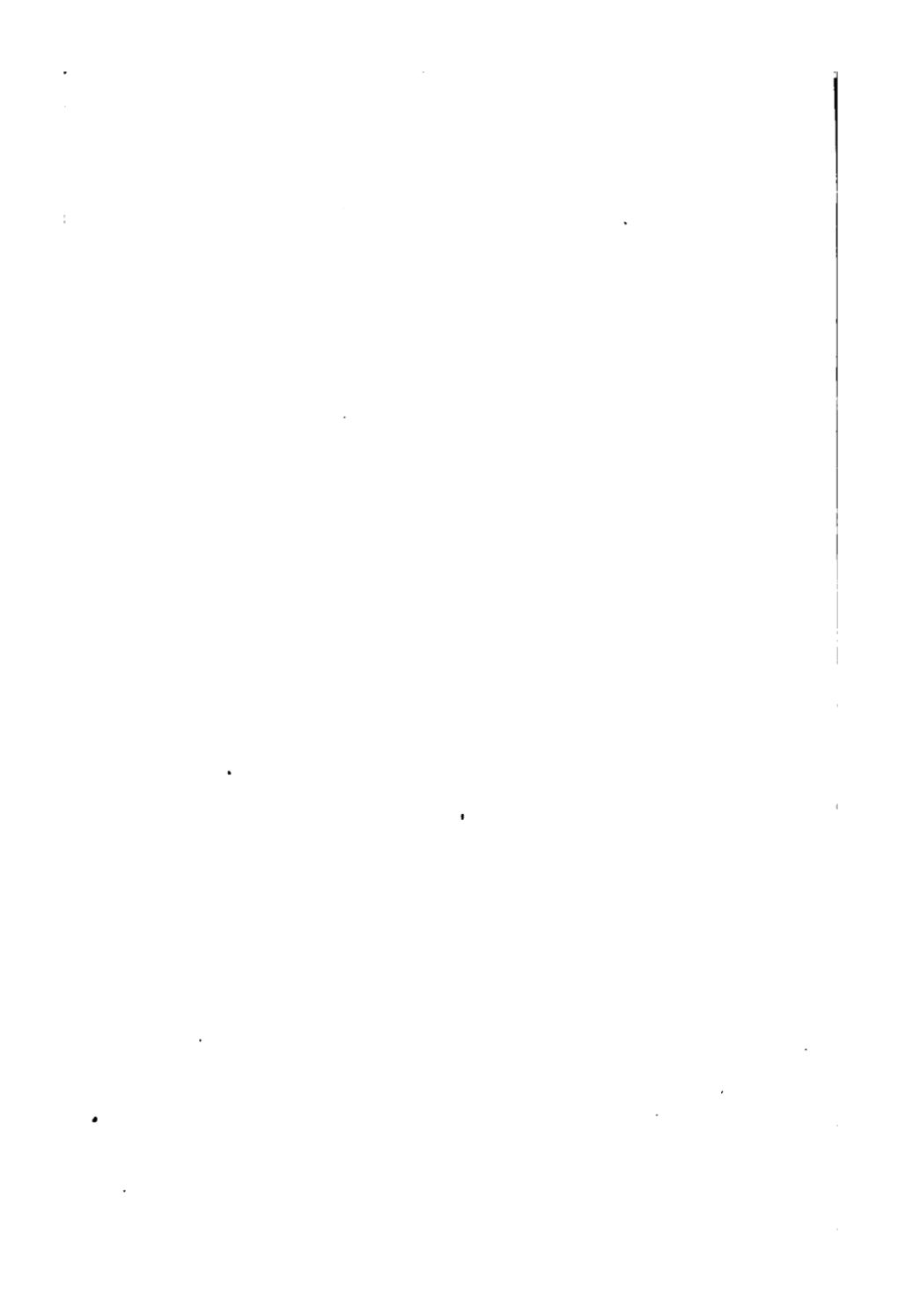


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INTRODUCTION.



I.

THE HISTORIC BATTLE OF KOSSOVO.*

THE Byzantine Empire, from the twelfth century until its final fall in 1453, played the same part as the Turkish Empire has been playing the last two hundred years, and is still playing in our days. It was slowly but surely decaying, and its predestined doom was evident to all students of history, although not even the most critical observer of the "signs of the

* Sources for this sketch:—1. Turkish historians: Neshri and Saad-eddin Chodja Effendi, Vienna Edition, 1859; Lewenclaw, "Historiae Mussulmanae," Francf. 1591. 2. Byzantine historians: Chalcochondylas and Duka's "Historiae Byzantinae," Bonnae, edit. Weberi, 1834. 3. Serbian chronics: Chronic of the Abbey Tronosha, Belgrade, 1853; Chronic of the Abbey Pek, Belgr., 1872; Chron. of the Monk Pahomiya, in Miloyevich's "Journey through Old Serbia," Belgr., 1871; "Istoriya Srbskyh Czarey," in *Journal of Serb learn. Society*, vol. xxi; Dr. Rachki, "Movement in the Slavonian South," in the *Journal of the South Slav Academy*, Agram, 1868. One of the most graphic descriptions of the battle of Kossovo is to be found in "The General History of the Turks," by Richard Knowles, Fellow of Lincoln Coll. Oxon, 1638.

times" could foretell with any certainty the hour and the day of its death. And with the decadence of the Byzantine Empire the Slavonian nations—the Serbians and Bulgarians—grew in strength, so that it seemed that the sceptre of empire which was falling from the weakened grasp of the Byzantine would be caught up and held firmly by the Slavonian rulers.

The Serbian king, Stephan Nemanya, received hospitably on his frontiers, in the year 1189, the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, who led the second crusade. Nemanya advised, then, Barbarossa to occupy definitively the whole Byzantine Empire, and promised him, if he would do so, the support of the Serbs and Bulgarians. Barbarossa, however, refused to entertain the project.

At the commencement of the fourteenth century the Serbian king, Milutin, was in active negotiation with the French king, Charles de Valois, to bring about a joint action of the French and Serbians against the Byzantine Empire, with a view to a divi-

sion of it between them in case of success. A little later a party was formed in Constantinople itself, with the purpose of placing King Milutin on the throne of Byzance. It was hoped that a new, powerful dynasty, assured of the joint support of the Serbian and Bulgarian nations, would be able to avert from the falling empire its apparently inevitable doom.

About the middle of the fourteenth century, the Serbian czar, Stephan Dushan, conquered Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia, and a part of Thracia. His great ideal was to unite the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks on the basis of *one* church, under *one* sceptre, in *one* great empire.

Dushan assumed the title of "Emperor of the Greeks, Serbians, and Bulgarians," and it is probable that he would have conquered the whole Byzantine Empire, including Constantinople, had not Ludovicus the Great, King of Hungary, sent Hungarian troops across the Save and Danube to invade Serbia every time he heard that Dushan was ap-

proaching Constantinople, and thus compelled him to desist from his march southward and defend Serbia.

Stephan Dushan died 2nd December, 1356, on his last march to Constantinople.

In the meantime the Turks had crossed over to Europe, having been invited by the Greeks to assist them in their war with the Serbians; and, finding the Greeks too weak to resist them, and the Serbs fully occupied by the internal dissensions which followed the death of Czar Dushan, they occupied one after another of the cities of Thracia.

As soon as something like order had been re-established in the southern portions of the Serbian Empire, King Vukashin (the father of the most popular hero of the national songs, "the King's son, Marko") gathered together a large army with the hope of driving the Turks back from Europe. He defeated them in one battle, and was marching on Adrianople, when, one night when his army was bivouacking on the banks of the Maritsa, about two days' march from that city, the

Turks fell suddenly upon it and destroyed it (6th September, 1371). This great blow shook the Serbian State to its foundations. The provinces south of Scopia and east of the Rhodope were then practically lost to Serbia, because the different petty dynastic rulers who had hitherto owned allegiance to the Serbian king were now compelled to become vassals of the Sultan. However, a compact Serbian State still remained, stretching from the Danube and Sava in the north to the sources of Vardar on the south, and from the Rhodope chain on the east to the Black Drin on the west, and comprising also a portion of North Albany, with the Adriatic coast from Dulcigno to the Bocca di Cattaro.

After the fatal battle in which King Vukashin and his army had perished, the Serbian nobles and Church dignitaries assembled in Scopia and chose solemnly Lazar for their Czar (1374). Lazar was very popular not only on account of his own many princely qualities, but because he was the husband of Militza, the great-granddaughter of the second son of

Stephan, the founder of the dynasty Nemanya, who had therefore some hereditary right to the throne of Serbia.

Historical investigation has brought to light sufficient proofs of the many noble qualities of Prince Lazar to justify the unanimous verdict which places him in the foremost rank of Serbian rulers and patriots. Personally he was a very brave and skilful soldier; he was just and eminently charitable; he was also wise and well cultured. Having grown up at the royal court of Czar Dushan he had become a favourite and intimate friend of that prince, and was initiated into all his political aspirations and plans.

To gain time to establish order in and strengthen his State, Lazar consented at first to pay tribute to the Porte; but he sought unceasingly to form alliances against the Turks. He reconciled Serbia and Hungary, made a friend of the King of Bosnia, and, by giving one of his daughters as wife to King Shichman of Bulgaria, assured himself also of the support of that State.

It is a fact worthy of remark that, towards the end of the fourteenth century, when the Greeks were seeking to make friends with Rome and Italy, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Bosnia were drawing into closer relations with Hungary. Evidently the "Eastern Christians" of those days felt that the power of the Turks was too strong to be broken without the help of other European States.

Czar Lazar's negotiations with Catholic Hungary and half-Catholic Bosnia were not regarded with much favour by some of the most powerful nobles. Among these were some who believed they had also pretensions to the Serbian throne, having been in some way or other connected with the former dynasty Nemanya.

One of these jealous nobles—it is believed to have been Marco Kraljevich—communicated to the Porte the secret negotiations of Lazar, and Sultan Murad I. decided to break at once the Christian League before it became more developed and compact. So he gathered

together all his scattered forces, and marched with a great army to Serbia.

The Serbian nobles and Church dignitaries were accustomed to meet, in the month of May each year, at the residence of their Sovereign, to deliberate on questions of national interest. These annual assemblies were called Sabors. Sultan Murad's declaration of war found the Serbian nobles thus assembled in the city of Krushevatz, the residence of Czar Lazar. The majority of the nobles were for war against the Turks at all risks, and therefore Lazar issued a proclamation calling all his vassals and tributary lords to arms, and appointing the plain of Kossovo as the meeting place. He sent also to ask succour from the Kings of Hungary and Bosnia.

The Serbians had not time to organize a proper defence. The Hungarian king could not send any adequate succours at such a sudden notice, but the Palatine Nicolas Gara, Czar Lazar's son-in-law, sent as many volunteers as he could gather. The King of Bosnia

sent twenty thousand men under the command of one of his most famous Vojvodes, Vlatco Hranich. John Castriot, the father of Scanderbegh, brought some companies of Albanians and Serbians from Dibra. All these auxiliary troops joined Lazar's army on Kossovo.

But many very important standards were missing when the armies were mustered.

The Sultan led his army straight towards Krushevatz, by the way of Philipopolis, Sophia, Nisch. (Krushevatz is not quite two days' march from Nisch.)

The strong fortress of Nisch was taken by assault after twenty-five days of heroic defence. Sultan Murad himself bore witness to the bravery of the Serbian defence of this place in his letter to the Sultan of Caramania.*

When Murad heard that a large Serbian army was concentrating on Kossovo he marched at once to meet it. The Turkish chroniclers say, that when Murad arrived on

* Feridoon-begh's Collection of Ottoman Monuments, Constantinople, 1878.

the low hills surrounding the plain of Kossovo and saw the Serbian army encamped on the left bank of the river Sitnitz, he could not help admiring its brilliant appearance, most of the Serbians wearing shining cuirasses. The Turkish army took position on the right bank of the Sitnitz, facing the west; its left wing leaned on Fort Pristina, and its right on the foot of Mount Kapaonick. The Sultan's tent was erected, in the centre of the army, on the bank of the rivulet Lab, which flows from the east into the Sitnitz. It is believed that the royal tent stood on that part of the plain called Mazgit, where there stands to-day "Murad's Tulbe," a small building with a cupola, erected over the spot where the Sultan's intestines were buried.

The right wing of the Turkish army was composed of Roumelians, and commanded by Bayazet, the eldest son of Murad. The left wing was formed of troops from Anatolia, under the command of the Sultan's younger son, Yacoob.

The Serbian army fronted the east, and

leant on the defiles leading to Albania and Bosnia, in order to keep open communication with these countries, whence large bodies of auxiliary troops were daily expected, although the Bosnian Vojvode, Vlatco Hranich, was already on Kossovo with twenty thousand men. Vojvode Radich, from Herzegovina (then called Zahoomlye or Zagorye, *i.e.* the country behind the hills), had not arrived, but he was known certainly to be rapidly approaching. It was also known that Balsha, Prince of Zetta, had gathered an army and was marching towards Kossovo.

The Serbian right wing was formed of the division under command of Vojvode Vuk Brankovich, who was a descendant of the Nemanyas and the husband of Czar Lazar's eldest daughter, Mara.

On the left wing were placed the Bosnians under Vlatco Hranich, and the centre was to be commanded by the Czar himself.

The Serbian Chronicles say that Murad had given strict orders that none of the rich cities, villages, or castles round about the Kossovo

plains should be destroyed, or damaged in any degree; and they state positively that the Turks did in reality destroy only the castles of Ban Strahinja, in the Toplitz valley; of Yoog Bogdan, in Leskovatz; of Milosh Obilich, in Liplyan; and the old royal summer residence of the Nemanyich, in Nerodimlya.*

It is evident, from Serbian historic sources, that Czar Lazar, a prince of great patriotism and nobility of character, was exceedingly grieved when he found that his secret negotiations with the neighbouring Christian princes had been betrayed to Sultan Murad. This grief could not but be deepened when he heard that in the Turkish camp were arrived some Bulgarian and Serbian princes as vassals of the Sultan. Dragash and Konstantin, who ruled the country between Seres and Kustendil, and even the sons of the late Serbian king Vukashin, Marko and Andreas-Kralyevich, lords of Prilip and Kostur, were among

*. *Vide* "Chronique of the Abbey Tronosha," section 54, p. 84; "Chronique of Pek," p. 53.

those who fought against Czar Lazar on Kossovo.*

Lazar's just wrath and indignation must have redoubled when he heard that Balsha, Prince of Zetta, had stopped his march suddenly on the frontier of his own territory, and, instead of hurrying to support the Serbian Czar on Kossovo, had entered into correspondence with Marko Kralyevich, who was already in the Turkish camp. Even some of the Vojvodes from Serbia delayed strangely their coming; among these were those from the Machva, the country lying between the rivers Drina and Sava.

It was evident to the Czar and his best leaders that the battle must be delayed if possible until the arrival of reinforcements.

Among the Vojvodes who gathered around the Czar on Kossovo existed jealousies and dissatisfactions of all kinds.

The party of the old aristocracy, headed by Vuk Brankovich, regarded disdainfully the

* The national poem on the battle speaks of King Vukashine as being with 60,000 men fighting in Lazar's army, but that is simply a poetical license, as it is known he died years earlier.

young warlike Vojvodes of less noble birth, who looked up to the *man with the dragon's heart*—as the old chronicles call him—Milosh Obilich. Milosh, who possessed great manly beauty of face and person and had a very chivalrous character, was exceedingly popular in the nation and also a great favourite of the Czar. Vuk and Milosh, both sons-in-law of Lazar and almost constantly with him, were for ever in collision in the council chamber and the banqueting hall. Oral traditions, supported by written chronicles, declare that their quarrels in one case led to a personal combat in which Milosh was victorious. Milosh Obilich was seen often at Kossovo in earnest conference with influential Vojvodes, his dearest friends, and Vuk Brankovich drew the Czar's attention to these conversations, suggesting that they probably had some connection with certain letters which had been discovered in the Serbian camp, and which called on the most distinguished Serbian Vojvodes to pass over to the camp of the Sultan.

Vuk's conduct in this was very natural, if we

consider how ardently he detested Milosh with that mean, envious hatred, which an evil-minded, vain, power-loving man feels usually to those whose character and attainments excite his jealousy, and whose popularity either with prince or people, or, rarer still and better, *with both prince and people*, seem to him to prejudice his own progress to popularity or power. And that Czar Lazar so readily credited, in this one fatal case, the vile suggestions of the false friend and disloyal vassal, is almost equally natural, when we remember how many evidences of disloyalty and lukewarm personal feeling to himself the late trying days and hours had brought to light.

On the 14th of June—the day of his patron saint, Amosius—Czar Lazar invited all his nobles and Vojvodes to a great banquet in his tent on Kossovo. All the guests noticed the Czar's sadness on this usually so cheerful festival. People talked in whispers about the probable treachery of Balsha* and others who had

* Later researches prove that Balsha was kept back by rebellion among his own people.

been expected and came not. The chronicles of Pek and Tronosha say that, while the nobles were discoursing in suppressed tones of this and that missing auxiliary, Czar Lazar sat very sad and silent, resting his head on his right hand.

The chronicle of the Monk Pahomye, after detailing the order in which the nobles sat at table, says, "After the banquet had lasted some time Czar Lazar commanded a gold goblet of wine to be brought to him. He stood up and took the cup, but as he held it the tears began to run down his cheeks, and cold perspiration to break out on his forehead. Then he sank back in his chair, without having been able to speak one word, and leant his head again against his hand. All the beholders looked on him in great wonder, and became very sad at heart seeing his over-great trouble. And all were very impatient to know what was going to happen. When the Czar had a little calmed himself he said, 'My lords, since the Serbian nation has existed there has always been in it the virtue of faithfulness, and that has been held in

honour and glory. But to-day I hear that faithlessness has shown itself among our people, and, hearing it, my heart has been most deeply wounded. My knees will not bear my weight since I have heard that three of our most influential Vojvodes are going to desert me and go over to the Turkish Czar. These three Vojvodes are Ivan Kosanchich, Milan of Toplitz, and Milosh Obilich! Milosh Obilich! whom I loved as my son! to whom I have given my daughter! to whom I was entrusting my whole army! I say I have heard this, but I can hardly believe it! But I rise now to give a toast: To thy health, O Milosh! Be faithful! Do not be faithless! and take this golden cup as a souvenir from me!'"

The Serbian chronicles and traditions agree in saying that Obilich answered in a few words of noble indignation, recognising at once in this scene the result of the work of Vuk Brankovich. The Tronosha* chronicler

* See extracts from the Chronicle (transcribed in 1765 by the Monk Pahomiye) in Milojevich's "Travels in Old Serbia." Belgrade, 1871, vol. ii., pp. 24—36.

continues : " Milosh rose, and bowing deeply to the Czar spoke out boldly, ' O Czar ! Treachery sits now by your hand ! As for me I have never been faithless ! ' and then, leaving the table, he added, ' To-morrow will show who is faithful and who is faithless ! By the death of Murat thou wilt see, O Czar, that I am ready to die for thee ! '

Milosh was followed to his tent by his two friends, Milan and Ivan, who, as soon as day broke, rode with him to the Turkish encampments. The nobles and Vojvodes, who had witnessed this scene with surprise and consternation, soon quieted themselves with the thought that to-morrow would make all right again, for it was certainly impossible that Milosh could ever seriously think of going over to the Sultan, and Lazar seems to have believed that his appeal to Milosh's loyalty would assure it even *if it had* momentarily wavered. Besides, few in the Serbian camp believed that the morrow would see the decisive battle.

Meanwhile* men were going about among the Serbian soldiers spreading all kinds of alarming news, and doing their utmost to excite a panic. Neshri confirms this—indirectly at least; he says: “That night the Serbs were very gay, drinking wine and enjoying all sorts of good cheer. Excited by wine they were selling and reselling the Turks they were sure to capture in the coming battle. The Serbs outdid each other in boasting. Each of them procured a long rope to bind his future slaves. One said, ‘My rope is thirty elbows long; it will bind plenty of Turks!’ Another said, ‘Oh, but mine is still longer!’ others said, ‘Rope is worth nothing, the Turks are strong and violent, we have got iron chains for them!’ But some one, walking among them, spoke now as if in jest, ‘Well, I must confess

* *Vide* “Memoirs of a Janissary,” written by the Serb, Michael Constantinovich, of Ostrovitza. He was born 1430, and captured by the Turks in 1455. He served, among the Janissaries, Mehmed II. for ten years, and then escaped to Hungary. Towards the end of his life he wrote in Polish a History of the Turks. This was published in Warsaw in 1828 under the title of “Pamietniki Janczari.”

I never yet saw Serbians carrying Turkish captives, but I have seen quite different things! I am afraid the Turks will use your own chains and ropes to bind you and carry you away!' Then one Serbian soldier said, 'Thou fool! canst thou not be quiet? If the Czar hears thee he will surely put thee to death.'

We will see now what this same Neshri says of the manner in which the Turks passed this night—the night before the great Kossovo battle.

"Sultan Murat held a military council in his tent.

"Our Prophet orders us to discuss well all eventualities and possibilities before entering into battle, that we may all have one and the same thought.' So said the Sultan to his assembled officers. Turning to Evrenos-Begh he added, 'Now tell us, O Evrenos-Begh, how we should conduct ourselves in the approaching conflict with these people.'

"The Padishah best knows how to command his army, and how to lead it into battle!'

answered Evrenos-Begh ; and all present approved his words.

“ ‘ But we ought to have all one and the same thought,’ said Murat ; and continued, ‘ I have placed thee as governor on the frontier of this country ; thou must have made thyself acquainted with the ways and manners of this people. Thy opinion will be of more weight than that of any other man.’

“ Then Evrenos-Begh bowed deeply to the Sultan and said, ‘ To him who is not very strong it is needful that he rises up very early, with hope in God, and chooses the best ground for fighting before the enemy chooses it. The enemy will then at once approach, but in coming to attack they will not keep close lines, so that it will be easy to fight them. That is the opinion of thy slave, O Sultan ! but my Sultan knows everything best.’

“ ‘ May God bless thee ! ’ answered the Sultan. ‘ That is also my opinion. And thou, Bayazet, what thinkest thou ? ’

“ ‘ My opinion agrees quite with that of my

Sultan and that of Evrenos-Begh,' replied Prince Bayazet.

"And I am also of that opinion," said Ali Pasha. And so said all the viziers.

"Then the Sultan asked, 'Shall we place the dromedaries in the front, or shall our men stand face to face with the enemy?'

"Bayazet answered, 'It is now many years that we are fighting with this people and we have never placed our dromedaries before us, and I do not think we ought to do so now.'

"Ali Pasha thought it also not necessary, because he opened the Koran on the words, 'Verily, a great army is often defeated by a small one,' which he read aloud.

"Opinion is a personal matter," said Evrenos-Begh, 'and I should like to be allowed to say two or three words.'

"The Sultan commanded him to speak frankly, and so he continued: 'The Sultan's Majesty has had a good thought, that the infidels' horses will not run against the dromedaries. But if the dromedaries should happen to be suddenly frightened by anything

—from which God preserve us!—which might be if they saw an army moving with great noise around them, they might begin to spring and run about, and so the one who hoped to be the first to conquer would be the first to fall! Have you never heard of the battle of Alexander with the Emperor of India? The Indian emperor placed his elephants round about his army, trusting in them as in a fortress. Alexander put saltpetre in tubes and set it on fire. Then the elephants grew shy, and turned back to run away, and so trampled down and destroyed the Indian army. In the same way our dromedaries may become our own ruin.'

"The Sultan and his viziers acknowledged the truth of Evrenos-Begh's words, and Murat continued, "We ought, therefore, to place in front our archers, and order them to send showers of arrows right and left, and then our soldiers, with loud shouts of 'Allah is the greatest!' must storm against the infidels. In such a fiery battle we shall either gain the victor's wreath or some other good luck. Anyhow, the end of all life is death, and why

should we have any anxiety about the other side of the grave?'"

So finished the council according to Neshri. Saad-ed-din adds to these details that "the Sultan, remaining alone, prayed fervently and long that he, fighting for Islam, might be deemed worthy the death of a martyr."

Neshri says, "The night was somewhat dark, and a wind, blowing from west to east, carried much dust into the eyes of the Turks, and that this circumstance caused some anxiety to the Sultan."

Just as day began to dawn the Turkish outposts sent in word that three of the most distinguished Serbian Vojvodes demanded audience of the Sultan. Murat ordered them to be brought at once to him in his tent.

The Serbian chronicler, Monk Pahomiy, says, that "Milosh Obilich, Ivan Kosanchich, and Milan of Toplitz were all three attired in their very best attire, and on their way through the Turkish camp the Turks were running and hustling each other to get a good sight of the Vojvodes, and were loud in their

admiration of them." Some groups of soldiers greeted them with loud exclamations, believing that they came to surrender themselves to the Sultan. Milosh, when they came to the Sultan's tent, demanded to be admitted alone. The Sultan received him with the question, "What do you claim as a reward for your surrender?" Milosh answered, "I wanted for nothing by my own Czar; I do not seek treasures."

As Murat was about to give him his hand to kiss, one of the viziers (Neshri says it was Ali Pasha) advised the Sultan "not to give his hand but his foot to the kiss of the giaour." So the Sultan stretched out one foot, and, as Milosh approached and bent, apparently to kiss it, he drew quickly his concealed dagger and struck Murat in the abdomen. Turning suddenly, he stabbed also Ali Pasha, and then rushed out of the tent, sprang into his saddle, and rode off quickly with his two friends. The Turks lost a few moments—they were so overwhelmed with horror and astonishment—but soon recovering themselves, the whole camp

was alarmed. Fighting desperately against the masses of Turks who assailed them, Ivan and Milan speedily succumbed to their innumerable wounds ; but Milosh, after having had his horse killed under him, and defending himself for some time on foot, was at last over-powered and taken captive.

Murat, seeing that he must certainly die of his wounds, ordered the Turks at once to attack, hoping to live long enough to know the result of this great battle.

Czar Lazar was attending morning prayer in the church of Samodreja when the news came to him that the Turks had attacked his first lines. He at once mounted his war horse and called together his Vojvodes to give them final instructions. He saw that Milosh, Ivan, and Milan were missing, and he was told that the three Vojvodes had been seen to ride into the Turkish camp at break of day. The news caused general consternation, but there was no time now for wonder or regret. Czar Lazar, though deeply moved, spoke some encouraging words to his Vojvodes, and then, making

a sign of the cross over his army with his sword, and, blessing them loudly in the name of Jesus Christ, he himself led on his soldiers against the Turks.

Neshri describes the battle thus: "The archers of the faithful shot their arrows from both sides. Numerous Serbians stood as if they were mountains of iron. When the rain of arrows was a little too sharp for them, they began to move, and it seemed as if the waves of the Black Sea were making noise, or as if the waves of the sea were thrown up and down. Suddenly the infidels stormed against the archers of the left wing, attacked them in the front, and, having divided their ranks, pushed them back. The infidels destroyed also the regiment (ordre) of Pazar, which stood behind the left wing. The little river Ovchariza (Shepherdess) was filled up with dead bodies. The horses and mules of the train fell into such confusion that they closed the way of escape to the faithful, who, therefore, fell as martyrs.

"Thus the Serbians pushed back the whole

left wing, and when the confounding news of this disaster was spread among the Turks they became very low-spirited. Some men died only from the great noise of the drums, horns, and other instruments, and the calling and shouting of men.

“From many lances the wind was not able to blow, and when the horsemen entered the streams the waters ceased to flow; arrows fell as if they were rained from the clouds; the shouting of men and their cries for help rose up like smoke from the earth to the sky; swords were striking against swords, lances against lances. Bayazet, with the right wing, was as little moved as the mountain on the right of his position (Kopaonik). But he saw that very little was wanting to lose the Sultan’s whole army.”

So Prince Bayazet went with reinforcements to the left wing, and succeeded soon in repulsing and throwing into confusion the hitherto victorious right wing of the Serbians. At that critical moment Vuk Brankovich ordered that a corps of 12,000 cuirassiers, the best

troops of the whole Serbian army, should retire from the battle-field. Czar Lazar knew that the battle was lost when he saw Vuk's cuirassiers retiring from the contest. In an outburst of bitter but noble indignation Lazar is reported to have said: "Cursed be Vuk in all his doings! during his life and after death!" and then, turning to the centre army and the nobles of his suit, he shouted with a loud voice: "Whoever wishes to leave me, let him follow the cursed Vuk Brankovich! As for me, I prefer to die to-day for the faith of Christ and God's church. Those who remain after me shall see far worse things than this!" Thus saying, the Czar rode again against the Turkish lines, followed by a number of his loyal nobles.

The Serbian chronicles declare that this new attack of Lazar was made with such fire that he had a fair chance to beat the Turks. But unfortunately the Czar's horse was killed under him, and while he was waiting a moment for another horse the news spread among his soldiers that he had been killed. A panic

seized them, and they began to retreat. When the Czar was remounted, he did his utmost to restore some order in his army, although himself desperately wounded. (Tradition tells of the sixty wounds of Czar Lazar.) As the Czar rode across the plain rallying his soldiers his horse fell with him in a deep hole dug by the peasants to entrap wolves. There he was taken prisoner by the Turks, and the Serbian army, dispersing rapidly, left soon after mid-day the Sultan's troops in possession of the field. And so ended the great Kossovo battle.

The Serbian chroniclers say that the Czar, having been led by his captors to the Sultan's tent, met Milosh Obilich, also a prisoner, by the door, and mildly reproached him for having by his rash deed provoked the Turks to so sudden battle and thus caused the destruction of the whole Serbian army. But Milosh answered: "That was not my work. It was the work of Vuk's calumny. I wished to prove that I was not going to turn traitor. I am sorry you could not see the proofs of

loyal love for you which my friends Ivan and Milan gave this morning on the field of Kossovo."

Deeply touched by these words, Czar Lazar gave Milosh his blessing. Prince Bayazet commanded that Lazar and all his nobles who had been captured should be executed by the sword, in the presence of the dying Sultan. This order drew forth an outburst of the devoted love felt by these nobles to their Czar. They all prayed Lazar to give them his blessing, and then begged Bayazet to let them be executed before their Czar. Bayazet refused their petition, and ordered that first Milosh Obilich, then Czar Lazar, and afterwards the nobles, should be beheaded. Then the Serbian nobles begged that their bodies might be buried at the feet of the body of Lazar. One Vojvode, Kraimir, begged Bayazet to permit him to hold a silver basin that the noble head of his Czar should not fall on the earth.

Prince Bayazet was so surprised by this extraordinary evidence of the noble's loyal

love to his Czar that he granted his request.

After Milosh Obilich had been executed Czar Lazar began to address his nobles and friends and say a few last words of farewell, but he was abruptly stopped by the Turks. Vojvode Kraimir knelt down and held forward a large silver basin. Then Lazar stepped forward and, kneeling, said aloud, "My God, my God! receive my soul!"

That evening, when the sun went down behind the dolomite peaks of Zetta, *two* Czars were lying dead on the plain of Kossovo, surrounded by the dead bodies of the flower of the Serbian nobility and of Turkish warriors. And the black clouds that gathered that night over Kossovo were the gloomy heralds of the long night of five hundred years which came then over the whole Serbian land.

II.

SERBIAN BARDS, AND NATIONAL SONGS ABOUT KOSVOVO.

IN the year 1326, Nicephoras Gregoras came to King Stephan Urosh IV. of Serbia, as ambassador from the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus the Elder. In a very graphic description of his journey, Nicephoras says that, while he and his suite were trying to find their way out of a forest in which they had lost themselves, some Serbians, who were attached to his suite, sang “tragic songs celebrating the great exploits of their national heroes.”*

This is believed to be the first mention of the singing of national songs among the South Slavonians.

A far more distinct reference to the national

* Nicephoras Gregoras, edit. Weberi, Bonnae, 1829, p. 377.

songs of Serbia is to be found in the description of the journey through Bosnia and Serbia of the ambassador of the Emperor Ferdinand II. to Sultan Soliman in 1531. It is there stated that the Serbs sang the brave deeds of the Christian captains who fought with the Turks on the frontiers of Croatia and Bosnia. Mention is also made there of songs about the Milosh Kobilich who killed Sultan Murat at Kossovo.*

As early as the year 1509, the Ragusan poet, Hectorovich, printed, in the appendix to his satirical poem, "On Fishing," three Serbian national songs; and the Dalmatian writer, Barakovich, printed another, a fourth, in 1614.†

After these weak commencements of collecting and publishing the national songs of Serbia, the desire to do so seemed about to die away, when a new impulse was suddenly given to it by the publication of Macpherson's

* "Itinerarium gen Constantinopli," Augsburg, 1532.

† Novakovich, "Istoria srpske Knyjicvnosti" (History of Serbian literature). Belgrade, 1870, p. 27.

“Ossian,” and the great sensation it created among the literary men of Europe. The Dalmatine, Abbé Fortis, published in 1794 a few Serbian national songs, which attracted the admiring interest of Goethe and Herder.

A few years later the German historian, Johannes Muller, requested the Ragusan author, George Ferich, to send him some Serbian national songs, and obtained from him thirty-eight songs in Latin translations. The German writers hoped that the Serbian national songs would throw some light on the composition of Homer's Iliad, as about that time Professor Wolf exposed his theory that the Iliad is a collection of national songs about Troy, and not the production of one poet.

The interest expressed by many distinguished European writers in Serbian popular poetry encouraged the Serbian, Vuk Karadjich, to devote himself thoroughly to the task of collecting the national songs of his country. He travelled through Serbia,

Herzegovina, Montenegro, and some parts of Bosnia, and whenever he had opportunity he wrote down the songs sung or recited before him. In 1814 he published in Vienna a first book, but his collection subsequently filled five octavo volumes.

The first volumes of the first incomplete edition of the Karadjich collection of Serbian National Songs made a considerable sensation, and a selection of songs was translated, in 1820, into English by the late Mr. Browning.

The critics seem chiefly to admire in the Serbian songs their simplicity of arrangement, their genuineness and freshness of sentiment, their realism in form combined with a lofty idealism in spirit. The poems are the unaffected expression of the feelings of a simple but highly endowed people—of a people whose heart throbbed exultingly when the Cross banners of the Crusaders supplanted the Crescent standards, and thrilled with sad sympathy with the despairing wail of a

maiden who sought her slain lover amid the dying and dead on the battle-field.

Perhaps among no nation in the world are the illiterate and uneducated peasantry so conversant with their own national history as in Serbia. On all occasions where a number of them assemble for celebrations or rejoicings—whether for family fêtes, slavas, weddings, or sabors *—some among them take the “gusle,” and to its monotonous accompaniment they sing, or recite, the famous deeds of their famous men of old. And the songs they seem generally to prefer are those in praise of “The King’s son, Marko” (Kralyevich Marko) and the various rhapsodies on the battle of Kossovo. But almost all the more famous Serbians who lived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are “familiar as household words” to the Serbian peasants of to-day through the medium of their national songs.

The Serbians have a natural gift for improvisation. The beggars, more especially the blind ones, pour out their pitiful petitions

* Mass meetings near churches or cloisters.

frequently in blank verse, and the wailing over dead bodies or by graves is usually all in a sort of metrical rhythmic outburst of passionate grief, or reproach, or despair.

Even the peasant member of the National Assembly not unfrequently speaks in blank verse when his feelings are roused to an exalted pitch.

Besides, the habit of reciting in metre is so common among the Serbs, that for almost every event they find a selection of stereotyped forms in which to clothe their ideas. A Serbian peasant of to-day would invariably choose, to begin a song, one of three stereotyped forms :—

1 { "Hod'te, bratjo ! da vam pesmu kajem."
"Come, O brothers ! that I recite you a song."

or { "Boje mili ! chuda golemoga !"
2 { "Dear God ! what a great wonder !"

or { "Boje mili ! na svem tebi fala !"
3 { "Dear God ! thanks to thee for all things !"

In a song a conversation between a wife and her husband—especially if the wife has something to protest against—begins always

by the wife "shedding large tears," and her husband asking "why she weeps?" whereupon she answers—

"Zazor mene u te pogledati,
A kamo li s tobom besediti!"

"I am ashamed even to glance at thee,
How much more, then, to speak to thee!"

A man who has reason to be ashamed always :—

"On pogleda u zemlitzu zrnu."
"Looks down on the black earth."

The earth is always "black," just so as the face of a good knight is always "white."

Songs usually conclude thus :—

"Od men' pesma, od Boga vam zdralye!"
"From me the song! from God health to you!"

or—

"Ne kad bilo; sad se prepovyseda!"
"Once it was so, now it is related!"

It is, as I have said, quite a natural thing for the Serbian peasantry to clothe in measured words their relations of any remarkable event. Foreign correspondents write of having seen

the Montenegrin soldiers, during the siege of Niksich, sit down each evening by the camp fires and recite the events of the day's fighting to the accompaniment of the gusle, while at the same time the Mohammedan Serbs who defended the posts were doing the same on the ramparts of Niksich; and the capture of Nisch by Prince Milan has already been the subject of a national poem.

During the winter of 1873—74, happening to be in Kragujevatz during the meeting of the National Assembly, I had the opportunity of hearing a certain peasant, Anta Neshich, recite in blank verse to numerous audiences outside the Assembly Room the whole debate on the bill for introducing the fresh monetary system into Serbia, concluding with the final acceptation of the bill. The poet put the debate on the Budget into the same taking form, to the great delight of his many auditors. Anta Neshich, from Ripany, a village about fifteen miles from Belgrade, was himself a member of the Assembly, and this fact, of course, did not make his recitations outside the walls less

interesting to his auditors. But in almost all the modern songs there seems a lack of the freshness of feeling and spirit which make the olden rhapsodies ever new. The singers content themselves too much with the images and expressions they find ready to their hand, and are too indolent often even to seek a new form for a new thing. But we must not be understood too literally when we say *sing*. Men always recite and never sing the national songs. Only the lyric songs—commonly called “women’s songs,” because in them women are the chief characters, and they are always sung by women—are really sung.

Since, even to-day, when information of passing events can be obtained directly or indirectly by so many channels, the Serbian peasants like to recur to the traditional form of recitation to impart or learn any interesting event, how much more natural and how much more intense must have been the interest with which they listened to their then frequently *only* news-bringer and historian—the travelling minstrel!—and how amply,

according to their means, would they reward his song ! According to Serbian tradition the two sons of the last Serbian ruler, Despot George Brankovich (who reigned from 1427 to 1456), after having been blinded by order of Sultan Murat II., took up the profession of wandering minstrels. The blind princes with gusle in hand travelled from city to city, from castle to castle, singing songs of the "good old time."

It being in accordance with the Serbian national character to put all the more interesting events of their national life into metre, and recite them with never-waning interest around their hearths or their watch-fires, how natural it was that they should wreath wreath after wreath of sad memorial flowers about the stately figures of their last Czar Lazar, and their-well beloved hero, Milosh Obilich ! Especially when these two figures stand out brightly on so black a ground as the battle-field on which Serbia lost, with the flower of her chivalry, her empire and her name as a free nation ! In the collection of Vuk Karad-

jich we find a number of rhapsodies describing incidents which occurred before, or during, or after the battle. Some of these have no proper commencement or conclusion, and are evidently fragments of some longer poems of which the other parts have from some cause or other been forgotten by the peasant reciters.

In the collection of Petranovich, "National Songs of Bosnia and Herzegovina,"* we find the longest (one thousand six hundred and seven lines), and relatively the most complete poem about the fall of the Serbian Empire. Fresh materials have been found in a manuscript collection made in Ragusa (in 1758), which belongs to the library of the Franciscan convent in that city. Professor Bogishich (the well-known author of "Customary Law of the South Slavonians") is editing this collection, which promises to be a very interesting work for literary men, inasmuch as it contains some of the oldest national songs, in which lines of fifteen feet remind one much of the long

* Edition of the Serbian Learned Society, Belgrade, 1867.

rhythms of the *Iliad*. Two of the Kosovo rhapsodies of this collection have been printed in 1859 by the Russian historian, Mr. Gilferding, in his work, "Bosnia, Herzegovina, i Staraya Serbia" (pp. 243—263). The idea of collecting these rhapsodies in one work was a very simple one, but because of its very simplicity perhaps it was overlooked for a long time.

It is true as far back as 1849 the Serbian poet, Yoksim Novich, produced an epic poem called "Lazarica," or "Songs about Lazar," using all the popular traditions about the last Serbian Czar. But although Novich imitated the rhythms and style of national song, the "Lazarica" was clearly the production of one individual poet, and not of various national peasant bards.

Novich's attempt has been followed by the Bohemian poet, Steg-fried Kaper, known by his translation of Serbian national songs into Bohemian and German. In 1851 he published in Vienna (by Franz Leo) his poem, "Lazar, der Serben-zar; nach Serbischen Sagen and

Heldengesängen." Still it was the poem of Sieg-fried Kaper, and not a national poem.

A Frenchman, Monsieur Adolphe D'Avril, was more successful in his little work, "La Bataille de Kossovo."* M. D'Avril had the happy thought of simply collecting, translating, and putting into logical relation the various Serbian national songs about the battle of Kossovo. M. D'Avril says in his preface : "Les chants relatifs à la bataille de Kossovo sont des pièces détachées, et même de simples fragments qui ne se relient pas d'eux-mêmes les uns aux autres. J'ai essayé, suivant l'expression grecque, de coudre ces fragments pour en faire un tout. Il n'y a rien d'ajouté au fond ni de changé dans la forme." In this way he has brought together twelve national songs, of which, however, the first and the last do not relate to the Kossovo battle.

Having M. D'Avril's example before him, M. Stoyan Novakovich (one of the most learned and diligent of the younger Serbian authors), published in 1871 in Belgrade, and in

* Paris, 1868, Librairie de Luxembourg.

1872 in Agram, his "Kossovo: Serbian National Songs on the Battle of Kossovo, being an Essay to combine them all in one Poem." But neither M. D'Avril nor M. Novakovich used the poem about "Strahinya," which was printed in the Vuk Karadjich collection, nor the rhapsodies of the Ragusa collection.

The South Slavonian Academy of Arts and Sciences published in Agram, in 1877, a critical essay, by M. Armine Pavich, on the National Songs of Kossovo, and his attempt to bring them into one poem. M. Pavich used all the existing material, sifted it with careful critical analysis, and thus produced a *cyclus*, which by its richness and poetical merit surpassed all previous works on the same subject.

Our own essay leans chiefly on the edition of the South Slavonian Academy, but our arrangement differs in some respects from that of M. Pavich.

He commences with the arrival of Murad on Kossovo and his challenge to Czar Lazar, then brings in the poem on the assembling of the Serbian nobles in Krushevatz and the recep-

tion of the challenge, and lastly tells us of the quarrel of Lazar's two daughters and the conflict of Vuk and Milosh. M. Pavich commences the Strahinya poem with the Ban's receiving his mother's letter; whilst we have added, from the original poem (which commences with Strahinya riding out from his castle), a few lines showing the hospitality shown to him in Krushevatz, and the arguments used by Youg Bogdan to deter him from going to Kossovo to look for his wife. We have also added, always from the original, the old Vojvode's indignant order to his sons to cut down their sister, for her treachery to her husband, when she is carried back to Krushevatz by Strahinya. This is left out in the Academy edition as throwing a shadow of unnatural cruelty on the father's character, but we think in justice to the finer light it throws on the noble character of Strahinya it ought not to be omitted.

M. Pavich does not give the poem on "Czar Lazar's Choice of the Heavenly Kingdom," which we have given because we think it

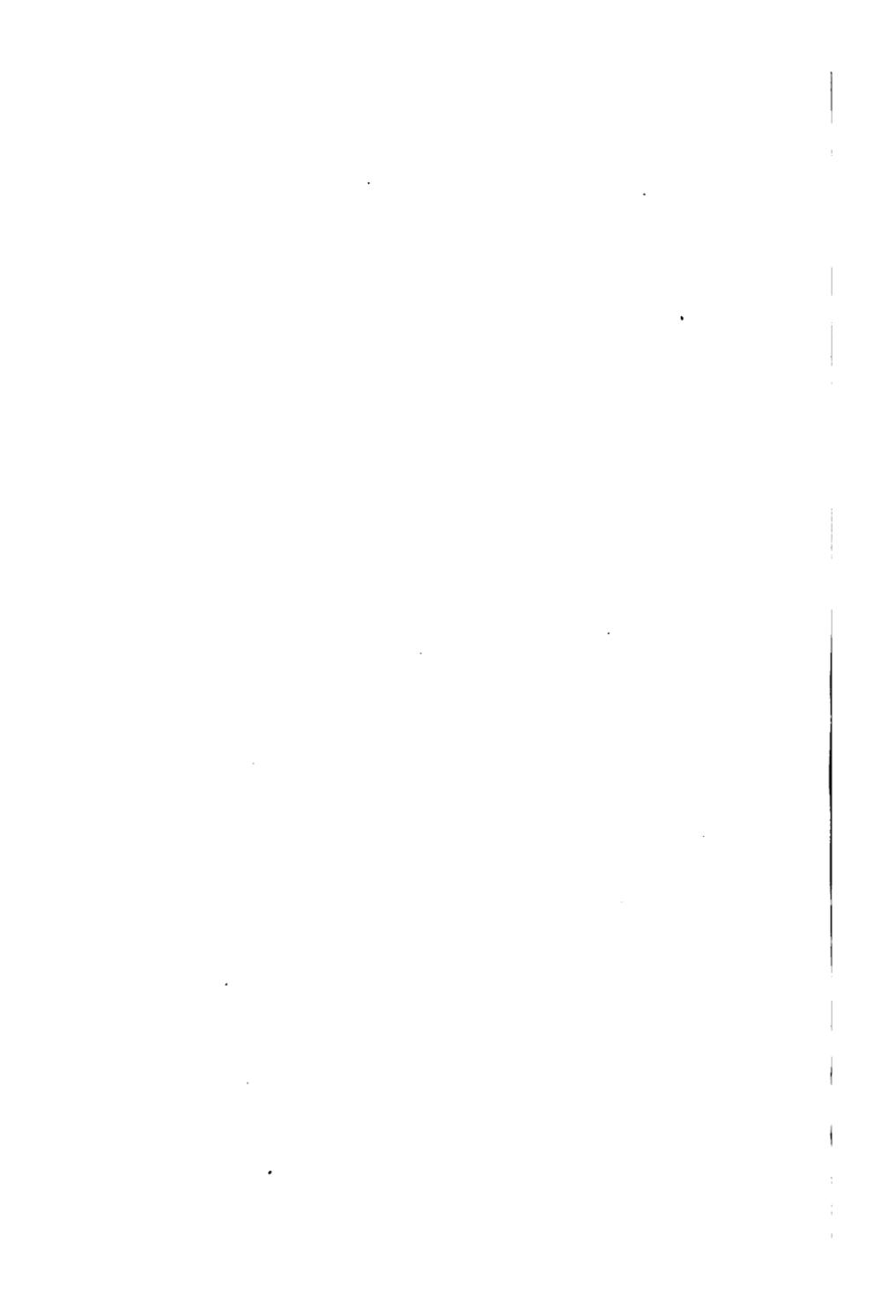
shows that the Serbs attributed the fall of their empire to a Higher will.

We have, however, omitted the song of the "Mother of the Yougovich," with which M. Pavich closes his cycle, because it seems to us that the Spartan character attributed in it to the old wife of Youg Bogdan savours rather too much of the production of a man of letters, and too little of the popular peasant notion of woman. This poem represents the mother of the nine brothers Yougovich speaking thus over the bloody bodies of her slain sons: "I am not sorry, my dear children, that you have fallen, because you fell defending your country against the enemy, and in doing so have done honour to your nation!"

We have now only to add that we have adhered as strictly as possible to the originals desiring to give simply literal translations.

E. L. M.

POEM: BATTLE OF KOSVO.



MARA AND VUKOSSAVA.

Militza sat close by the casement ;
Beside her sat two of her daughters,
The wives of Milosh and Brankovich.

They sat close by the castle casement,
And looked down on the fields below them,
Where Lazar rode with his sons-in-law,
The Vojvodes Milosh and Brankovich.

The Empress Militza said proudly :
“ Tis a gay sight truly to see them,
The Czar with his two valiant Vojvodes !
I,—the empress,—wager my two eyes
That Brankovich Vuk and the Milosh
Are equally handsome and stately ! ”

But Mara, her daughter, said shortly :
“ My mother, great is the difference !
The mother of Vuk was of high birth,

A shepherdess gave life to Milosh ;
He was reared up and fed on mare's milk."

Replied Vukossava, her sister :
" My sister, thou speakest but truly.
Noble born the mother of Vuk was,
And low born the mother of Milosh,
Poorly, too, on mare's milk she reared him.
But that mare could spring over two wolves
And crush out their teeth with her strong
hoofs.
Thy Vuk * may wear proud costly sables ;
My Kobilich † suits silks and velvet."

Proud Mara, resenting these hard words,
Her sister's rosy cheek struck lightly ;
On her white hand shone a bright diamond ;
The sharp stone scarred slightly the fair skin ;
The red blood streamed over the white face.
To the garden ran Vukossova ;
She sat down under an orange-tree
And wiped off the white tears and red blood.

* *Vuk*, wolf.

† *Kobila*, mare.

Czar Lazar rode up to his castle ;
His wife hurried down to receive him ;
Mara took Vuk Brankovich's charger,
But no one was there to meet Milosh.
No marvel that Milosh looked round him !
The Empress would have tak'n his war steed,
But he would not let her come near him.
He saw his young wife in the garden,—
Sitting in the green garden weeping.
He saw on her white face red blood-stains.
From his charger quickly he leapt down,—
He hurried into the green garden
To ask his young wife what had harmed her.
“ What hast thou ? Wherefore art thou weep-
ing ?
Why sitt'st thou alone in thy sadness ?
What mean, on thy white face, those blood-
stains ? ”

To Obilich answered his young wife ;
She told him true all that had happened,
And, hearing her, Milosh grew angry.
Quick flamed up in anger his warm heart ;
He rushed out like wind from the garden,

Ran up and caught Vuk by the white throat,
He flung him down quick on the black earth ;
As he lay with his right foot struck him,—
And broke two teeth of the Brankovich !

Then Czar Lazar stepped to him quickly :
“ Not so, my son ! (may God not kill thee) !
With Brankovich shalt thou not quarrel.”

And so with good words the Czar calmed him.

SULTAN MURAT CHALLENGES CZAR LAZAR.

To Krushevatz, the many-coloured* fort,
Czar Lazar called his Vojvodes and nobles
For feast and council, and assigned to each
The place due to his deeds, or rank, or birth.

In his own place the Czar sat, and below,
By his left hand, Ivko of Cognitza.
On Ivko's left sat Givko Omolyn,
And below Givko sat Vuk Brankovich.
At Vuk's left hand sat Ivan Kosanchich,
And next to him Milan of Toplitz.
At Milan's left sat Milosh Obilich,
And below Milosh, the nine Yougovich,
Militza's brethren, old Youg Bogdan's sons.
Militza's father, old Youg Bogdan, sat

* In the Serbian original : "U Krushevazu gradu Sharenome." It is believed that the epithet "Sharenome" (Many-coloured) came from the circumstance that most of the public buildings in Krushevatz in Czar Lazar's time were built of white marble and red bricks.

In place of honour, at the Czar's right hand,
And, by old Youg, Strahinya Banovich.
And Stephan Mussich right hand of the Ban.
By Mussich close Kuchainatz Jovan sat ;
To Jovan's right, Petar Branichevatz :
Below Branichevatz sat other knights.
Wine served to all the good page Bojidar.
When the glee of the feasters was highest,
Came in quickly a Tartar, a courier,
Bringing letters from Murat the Sultan.

Bareheaded, lowbending, the courier
On Czar Lazar's knee laid the letter ;
The Czar took it, opened and read it.
As he read great tears wet the paper,
Sad tears from the eyes of Czar Lazar !
With wonder his nobles looked on him—
Looked on him, and then at each other.
At last boldly spoke out Youg Bogdan :
“ Czar Lazar ! Thou head of the Serbians !
We have seen thee often read letters,—
Till now we ne'er saw thee weep o'er them !
That note—fire consume it !—whence comes it ?
Who wrote it ?—Who sent it ?—What says it ? ”

To Youg answered sadly Czar Lazar :
“ And if I shed tears there is reason—
Great reason for tears and for sorrow !
Bad tidings are these that have touched me.
From Kossovo writes Sultan Murat.
He is there—he sent thence this letter :

“ “ O Lazar ! Thou head of the Serbians !
There was not, and never there can be,
One land in the hands of *two* masters—
One Rayah to pay down *two* haratch.
No more can there rule here *two* Sultans.
Send *me*, then, the keys and the haratch,
The gold keys of thy forts and castles ;—
Send haratch for seven full summers.
Or, if thou refusest to send them,
Come straight to meet me on Kossovo !—
The sword shall divide the land for us ! ”

“ So, Vojvodes, writes me Murat, the Sultan.—
I pray you give me now faithful counsel !
Shall we go to meet him on Kossovo ?—
Or sink down,—Serbian nobles !—to Raya ? ”

To Czar Lazar Vuk Brankovich answer'd
"To-day it is hard to give counsel.
—The hosts of the Sultan are mighty !
Three hundred thousand trained fighting-men !
—O Czar ! Should we put down on paper
The name of each man owes thee service,
We scarce should count *one* hundred thousand !
—Can each Serbian fight with three Turks,
Prince ?—
Fight we may, but conquer we cannot !—
And God's fear is not with the mighty.
It is best then to yield and shed no blood."—

Then all the Serbian lords looked down to earth,
But Obilich Milosh, he flashed up like flame,
And spoke out boldly to the glorious prince :
" My Lord ! and Serbia's Head,—I pray thee,
hear !
Better for thee and us we die like men,
Than give our land away as women might !
And, *should* we give, will not our children curse
And shame us in our graves eternally ?
And call us cowards that we gave the land ?
It cannot be, O Lazar !—Rather send

Ivan of Kosanchich, my pobratim,*
To join the Turkish hosts on Kossovo,
And see what men there are, and how they
stand.

Send, too, thy royal word throughout the land,
And call together all thy men-at-arms,
That we may Murat meet on Kossovo!—
And shed there heroes' blood, come good or
ill!"

Czar Lazar and his Vojvodes rose like men
Called back to life by Milosh's fiery words;
They rose, and cried: "O Milosh! thanks to
thee!
Well hast thou spoken! valiant words, and
wise!"

Then Ivan Kosanchich stepped to the Czar,
And, bending, kissed his right hand as he said:
"O glorious Prince! O Lazar! Serbians'
Head!
Fear not for me. With the first dawn I go

* Brother-in-God.

Straight to the Turks, and bring word what I
see.

Meantime collect thy forces and we'll fight,—
God ! we'll *attack* the Turks on Kossovo,
And—so God aid us!—break down Murat's
might!"

Straightway the Serbian Czar his summons
sent

Through all his lands, and called forth all his
men,

His nobles, and his Vojvodes, and their men ;
By God he called on them, and in God's name :

" Whoever born of Serbian blood or kin

Comes not to fight the Turk on Kossovo,

To him be never son or daughter born,

No child to heir his lands or bear his name !

For him no grape grow red,—no corn grow
white ;

In his hands nothing prosper!—May he live
Alone, unloved ! and die unmourned, alone!"

So said the Czar, and so his people heard.

THE TURKS ON KOSOVO.

EPISODE OF STRAHINYA BAN.

Ban Strahinya tarried in Krushevatz,
In the castle of mighty Youg Bogdan :
By his wife's father feasted, by Bogdan :
Well served was he by the nine Yougovich,
By their wives also, nine noble ladies.

All the nobles dwelling in Krushevatz
Gave no peace, day and night, to Youg Bogdan,
Praying him, every morning and evening,
To bring as honoured guest to their banquets,
His son-in-law, the Lord of Banyska—
A noble who had nowhere his equal.

So Strahinya there tarried and feasted,
Till came to him, one morning by sunrise,
A courier bearing quick a white letter.
He came straight from his fortress Banyska,
And brought him black news from his mother!

Strahinya seized the letter and read it:—
Read, shuddering the curse of his mother!
“Woe thee and thy feastings in Krushevatz!
Of thy wife’s father cursed be the castle!
Read this, and learn that ill-luck has crushed
thee!
With a great force arrived here from Yedren,
Sultan Murat!—undreamed of—unthought of!—
Sultan Murat is here, on Kossovo!
He has brought with him, too, his grand vizier,
His viziers, and the thrice-curséd Vechils!
Brought them from all his countries and kingdoms!
All his soldiers the Sultan has summoned,
And brought all on the plain of Kossovo.
Like bees are they swarming on Kossovo!
They are crowding the banks of the rivers,
Of both the rivers, Lab and Sitnitsa.
The Turks, as a cloud, cover Kossovo!—
O my son!—and our men are relating
That Turks hold, too, the countries from Mar-
mor,
From Marmor to the withered-up Maple,
From the Maple all up to Sázliya!

From the vaultéd bridge all up to Zvechan !
From fort Zvechan as far up as Chechan,—
From Chechan to the top of the mountain ;
All that land is trampled by Turkish feet !
There are, my son—after their army rolls—
Of Spahis alone one hundred thousand !
Of Spahis who hold lands from the Sultan,
Knights who eat of his bread, and fight for him ;
Who ride horses trained long for the battle ;
Who burden themselves never with weapons ;
Who carry, indeed, none but their sabres.
But there are yet other Turkish armies.
The fiery Janissaries are here, too !
They who hold up the white court of Yedren !
Quite a full hundred thousand trained soldiers !—
—It is said there is still a third army :
Men of Tooka, they say, and Mandjuka,
Who are also the fiercest of warriors.
Oh, my son ! there are all sorts of soldiers
In the service of Murat, the Sultan !—

“But, among the ill-famed ones, the worst
famed,—

The most self-willed of all, is Vlah-Ali!—
Not even Sultan Murat obeys he!
And he laughs in his sleeve at the viziers.—
The Sultan’s mighty army he values
No more than the black ants on the sandhills!
Oh, a strong man, they say, is Vlah-Ali!
Without working mischief he could not pass,—
Not even with Murat, to Kossovo.

“Oh, my son! he assaulted our castle;
Going round by the left to Banyska,
He burned down our fort, little Banyska,
Tore up and scatter’d far its foundations;
Thy faithful servants drove to the four winds;
Thy mother trampled under his charger,
And thy wife he has carried off with him,
Thy faithful wife carried to Kossovo;
In his green tent he keeps her to serve him.

“Oh, my son! *I* wail here amid ruins,
And *thou* sittest feasting in Krushevatz!
Curs’d be the red wine that thou drinkest!”

When Strahinya had read through the missive,
Stern and wrathful look'd he in his sadness ;
On his shoulders drooped down his moustachios,
And tears gleam'd in his eyes, but they fell
not ;
Fierce wrath check'd the wild sorrow within
him.

Flamed up sudden fiery Yough Bogdan :
“ Oh, my son-in-law, may God be with thee !
Why hast thou this morn waken'd so early ?
Is it lack of slumber that saddens thee ?
Where is all thy accustom'd good-humour ?—
My son-in-law, with whom art thou angry ?—
With jests have the nine brothers Youghovich,
My nine sons, perhaps anger'd and pain'd
thee ?—
Have their ladies been lacking in service ?—
Or, perchance, in my house something fails
thee ?—
Say, son-in-law, what is it ? How is it ? ”

Up started Strahinya and answered him ;

“ Be at peace, oh, my father, Youg Bogdan !—
My brothers, too, are my wife’s nine brethren;
With them and with their wives I live kindly ;
The nine ladies are noble and gentle,
Both their converse and service are faultless.
And thy house, old Youg Bogdan, lacks nothing;
But still I have reason for sadness.
From my mother a missive has reached me ;
A letter from my little Banyska,
Bringing curses and wails from my mother.”

Then he told the ill news that had pain’d him :
How his castle was pillaged and burnt down,—
His mother trampled under the horse hoofs,—
His true vassals dispers’d to the four winds,—
And his faithful wife carried off captive.
“ But, my father-in-law, old Youg Bogdan,
It’s not only my *wife* who is captive !—
Thy daughter remains ever thy daughter,
Be she *my* wife, or wife to some other.
To thee and to me equal the shame is ;
To thee as to me this great wrong is done !
Would’st thou mourn for me dead, O my
father ?

It were best thou should'st help me whilst
living!—

I beseech thee most humbly, Youg Bogdan,
Give me now to go with me thy nine sons!
Let my brothers go now to Kossovo,
That I seek there the base Turkish spoiler
Who has carried my wife away with him.
Thou need'st not be anxious, my father,
Thou need'st have no fear for thy nine sons!
I will put them in true Turkish dresses;
I will bind round their heads with white tur-
bans;
Green garments will I put on their shoulders,
And wide sack-like trousers I will give them.
I will gird them with sharp flame-like sabres;
I will summon thy servants, and teach them
How to saddle and girth firm the horses
And cover them all over with bearskins.
Like Janissaries will look then my brothers,
Like Janissaries look the nine Yougovich.
And subtle advice, too, will I give them,
So that, when they ride over Kossovo,
They will seem to be simply my vassals,
And show youthful fear of their leader.

Whoever of the soldiers of Murat
May desire to stop or to question us,
To that man I alone will give answer.
No fear do I feel of their questioning !
The Turkish I can speak, and the Manu,
Of Arabian I also know something ;
The Albanian tongue does not affright me.
Trust me, I will lead safely thy children
Through the Turkish army on Kossovo ;
Through the whole Turkish army I'll lead them
Till I find out the mighty Vlah-Ali.
Vlah-Ali ! the vile robber who bore off
My true wife, and who burnt down my castle!
Oh, Youg, let my nine brothers go with me !
Alone, little, indeed, are my chances ;
But if they may go with me I fear not,
For if wounded I shall not be captured.”

Like a fire flamed up fiercely Youg Bogdan :
“ Oh, son-in-law, Banovich Strahinya,
To-day it is quite clear thou art foolish !
Oh ! to ask me to lend thee my nine sons,
To lead forth my children to Kossovo,
That their throats may be cut by the Moslim.

Now I pray thee, my son, speak no folly!—
My nine sons *shall not* go to Kossovo,
Though I see nevermore my lost daughter.
Besides, Ban, all this grieving is foolish.
From the Turks would'st thou take back a
woman?
So defiled, curs'd by God, could'st thou love
her?
To her now, too, the Turk will be dearer.
Let her be. May the evil one take her!
Another wife will I find thee, a fairer;
And thou shalt remain here with me always.
I am always thy friend—I, Youg Bogdan—
But my nine sons go not to Kossovo."

Ban Strahinya blazed up like a live flame,
Mad at once with great anger and sorrow.
Then, disdaining to call for the servants,
He descended himself to the stables,
And in wrathful haste saddled his charger.
Oh, could you then only have seen him,
How he saddled and bridled him quickly,
How he led him forth into the courtyard,
Led him close up beside the white step-stone !

There, mounting, he looked down on his
brethren,
But the nine all looked down on the black
earth ;
He looked round at his cousin Nemanich,
But young Nemanich looked steadfastly down-
ward.
At the banquets companions were plenty,
Each one of them had drunk to him, toasting :
“ We love thee, beyond everything love thee !
We love thee, friend and brother Strahinya ! ”
But to-day, in the time of his sore need,
Who dares to prove his love to Strahinya ?
Who dares to ride with him to Kossovo ?
The Ban saw he must go without comrade,
But he rode still straight out to Kossovo.
As Strahinya Ban rode through the wide field
He glanced often behind him with longing ;
Glanced back to the white city Krushevatz.
Who could tell how his friends would regret
him ?
Would they venture at last to ride with him ?
When he saw, in his need, none stood by him,

No friend ready to follow and succour,
He sat silent awhile on his charger ;
He remembered his greyhound Karaman,
Left behind in the courtyard of Bogdan,
That dog dearer still than his war steed !
Sudden shouted he loud and impatient,
And the dog heard his call and ran quickly,
Rushed up gladly and sprang gay round
his grey horse,
His gold collar rung out with his springing !
The dog's joy gave new heart to his master ;
The Ban rode on with courage and gladness,
He rode straight on his swift faithful charger,
Followed close by his greyhound Karaman,
O'er fields and o'er mountains to Kosovo.

When he saw the plain crowded with
soldiers,
With the soldiers of Murat the Sultan,
He felt something like fear steal over him ;
Still he called on the name of the true God,
And rode straight through the camps without
stopping.
Ban Strahinya rode over Kosovo—

He rode westward, and southward, and eastward,
Rode northward, searching still for Vlah-Ali,
But Vlah-Ali the mighty he saw not.
Then he turn'd to the river Sitnitza,
And a wonderful sight did he see there !
On the bank of the streamlet Sitnitza
A widely spreading green tent was standing,
On the tent summit gleam'd a gold apple ;
In the sunlight shone bright the gold apple ;
Before the tent a war steed stood pawing
By a tall spear struck deep in the black earth.
The horse stood there still stamping and pawing,
With his hard hoofs sharp striking the black earth,
Though a sack full of oats hung before him.
When Strahinya Ban rode up and saw this,
He said, " 'Tis the green tent of Vlah-Ali ! "
And he spurr'd his steed sooner to reach it.
Arrived there he laid hand on his war spear
And lifted up bold with it the curtains
To see whom the great tent held within it.

But not there was the mighty Vlah-Ali.

Strahinya only saw an old Dervish
Whose white beard reached down to his
girdle.—

In the tent there was no one besides him—
Well for him! the false Turk! the wine-drinker!
Drinking wine by himself out of full bowls!
So sitting and drinking by himself there
The Dervish was flush'd red to the eyebrows.
Ban Strahinya gazed on him with wonder,
Then greeted him calm, Turk-like, with
“Selam!”

The wine-drunken old Dervish looked at him,
Looked sharply, and then answered him boldly:
“Hail to thee, O Banovich Strahinya!
Lord of Little Banyska, near Kossovo!”

Then Strahinya was startled; fear seized him;
But still he spoke out bold to the Dervish;
In the Turkish tongue Strahinya answered:
“Shame, O Dervish! thou son of cursed mother!
Why drinkest thou here wine like a drunkard?
Wherfore, wine-besotted, speak'st thou hard
words?

Why insult a Turk by calling him Giaour?
Who is he by whose name thou hast call'd me?
What know I of Banovich Strahinya?
To our Czar am I loyal and faithful!—
The Czar's chargers have broken their halters
And run wildly now through the encampments,
All our nobles ride hither and thither,
And are trying their utmost to catch them.
Should I speak to the Czar or his Viziers
Of thy strange words what woe would befall
thee!"

Long and loud laughed the drunken old
Dervish:
"O Strahinya! valiant Ban Strahinya!—
Know, O Ban (may no evil come near thee!)
If I were on the summit of Golech,
And thence saw thee 'mid the Sultan's soldiers,
I should know thee at once and thy grey
horse!—
Should know thee and thy greyhound Kara-
man,—
Him whom thou lov'st still more than thy
charger.

Strahinya ! Lord of Little Banyska !
I knew thee, Ban, at once, by thy forehead ;
Knew thee, too, by thy two eyes beneath it ;
I knew thee, Ban, by thy dark moustachios.—
Forgettest thou (all trouble flee from thee !)
That I was, years agone now, thy prisoner ?
On Suhara thy pandours * had caught me,
And carried to thy castle a captive ;
Thou didst cast me, then, into a dungeon,
And didst keep me there during nine long years ;
But at last, the tenth year, thou hadst pity,
Thou didst call to thee then Rad, thy jailer,
And bade him bring me into the courtyard.
O Strahinya Ban ! hast thou forgotten
The questions that thou didst thereput to me ?—
'My captive ! O thou snake amongst the Turks !
Dost thou wish then to die in thy dungeon ?
Could'st thou not find thee somewhere a ran-
som ?'
To thy questions I answered thee truly,
That I could, perchance, find me a ransom
If I could but go home to my own place,
Because there I had lands and some treasures ;

* *Pandour*, armed police.

I could sell them and bring thee the ransom ;
But for that it were need thou could'st trust
me,—

That thou trustest my word and my promise.
I would swear by my life and the true God
To come back or to send thee the ransom.—
Thou hadst faith in my oath, Ban Strahinya !
Thou lett'st me go back free to my country ;
But when I arrived there, O Banovich,
Nothing found I but black desolation !
The pestilence had been there before me,
And not one soul remain'd of my household.
Through the walls of my desolate dwelling
The green grasses and wild weeds were growing ;
All my lands by the Turks had been taken
And giv'n away to their daughters as dowry ;
They believed that no owner was living,
Or why went thus the buildings to ruin ?—
Of what had been mine nothing was left me !
How, therefore, could I seek thee a ransom ?
After thinking, and planning, and dreaming,
I borrowed me post horses for Yedren,
And to Yedren rode I, to the Sultan.
The Vizier saw me and said to the Sultan

I look'd likely enough for a soldier,
And strong soldiers were needed for battle.
So good clothes and good weapons were
given me,
And a tent to hold me and my weapons ;
In a book my name wrote down the Vizier
As one sworn to serve lifelong the Sultan.

“Now to-day, Ban Strahinya ! thou comest
To say to me, ‘Now give me thy ransom !’
But I tell thee I have not one penny !—
‘Tis a pity, O Ban, that thou camest
To Kossovo, amidst this great army,
To lose thy life and for it gain nothing.”

Strahinya Ban knew then the old Dervish,
And quickly from his war steed dismounted,
To embrace him, and speak to him friendly :
“Henceforth thou art my brother in God’s
name !
I forgave thee, O Dervish, thy ransom,
I come not now to ask for one penny ;
I am looking for mighty Vlah-Ali,
Who has pillaged and burnt down my castle,

And my wife carried off as his captive.
Tell me, O Dervish, where shall I find him ?
Where shall I find the robber Vlah-Ali ?
I have called thee in God's name my brother,
Do not suffer the Turks to surround me ;
Do not tell them that I am amongst them."

Then the old Dervish swore by the true God,
" I give thee now—O falcon ! Strahinya !—
I give thee my faith steadfast as granite,
That if thou should'st kill half the Czar's
soldiers
I should not and I would not betray thee ;
The bread thou has given me is sacred.
Thou didst keep me nine full years a captive,
But red wine did'st thou give me and white
bread ;
Thou hast brought me oft forth to the sunshine ;
To thee, then, I shall never be traitor.
It is true that I brought thee no ransom,
That I kept not my word ; but how could I ?
I found nothing was left me but bare earth !
But thou hast now no reason to fear me.
As for him whom thou seekest, Vlah-Ali,

His tent he has pitched high on the mountain,
His white tent stands high up on Mount Golech.
But, Strahinya! I pray thee now, hear me!
Mount quickly and ride fast from Kossovo,
If thou stay'st here thy life is worth nothing;
Thy trust in thy true heart will not save thee,
Neither will thy strong hand nor swift sabre;
Still less, O Ban! will thy poison'd war spear.
And if thou could'st come near to Vlah-Ali,
What good, Ban Strahinya, would it do thee?
Not thy sharp sword nor swift steed will save
thee!

He will seize thee alive in his strong arms,
He will break into pieces thy weapons!
He will pluck thee thy two eyes out living!"

But aloud laughed Ban Strahinya gaily:
" My brother in God, O my old Dervish!
Against *one man* thou need'st not to warn me,
But don't to the whole army betray me."

Then answered him again the old Dervish:
" But hear me, O Banovich Strahinya!
My faith to thee as firm is as granite!"

And shouldest thou spur on thy swift war
steed

And cut down even half the Czar's army,
I would never, I swear it ! betray thee !
Would not say to the Turks, '*tis Strahinya !*'

Yet a little while the two held converse ;
But, with the first glow of morn, Strahinya
Mounted quick and spoke thus from his saddle :
" My brother in God ! hear me, old Dervish !
Thou lead'st thy steed to drink in Sitnitza,—
Each morn and each even dost thou lead
him,—

Tell me where are the fords of the river,
That I ride not my horse in deep waters."

Then the old Dervish answer'd him truly :
" Ban Strahinya, thou proud Serbian falcon !
With thy stout heart and with thy strong war
horse,
Ev'rywhere shalt thou find a safe passage."

Strahinya cross'd the river Sitnitza,
And rode slow to the foot of Mount Golech ;
He was still at the base of the mountain

When the sun shone out over Kossovo,
On the soldiers and camps of the Sultan.

But what did *He* at this hour, Vlah-Ali?—
Truly the Turk had an evil custom!
For he liked most to sleep at the sunrise:
Never closed he his eyes till the sun rose.
Very dear to him was she—his new slave;
Dear to him was the wife of Strahinya!
With his head on her white shoulder resting,
She held him, looking straight through the
tent-door,
Looking down to the field of Kossovo;
She looked down on the horses and soldiers,
Glancing carelessly o'er the great army.

But what sees she now? Why does she
tremble?

One lonely knight rides slow up Mount
Golech!

One man riding alone amid thousands!

When she saw him, she touched with her
white hand

The right cheek of the sleeper, to wake him.

“Wake, my Lord! Wake up, mighty Vlah-Ali!

Rise up quick, for thy head is in danger!
Gird on thee thy bright sword! Take thy
war spear!

For he comes now! He comes! Ban Strahinya!
Thy head he will cut off, and—woe to me!
He will put to me living the eyes out.”

Vlah-Ali leapt up quick, then laugh'd loudly:
“My darling! O sweet wife of Strahinya,
It is wonderful how much thou fear'st him!
I think e'en in the city of Yedren,
When I take thee there, still wilt thou see him!
In visions he will follow and fright thee.—
Yonder rider is not Ban Strahinya!
It is but one of the Sultan's soldiers.
He must bring me some message from Murat,
From Czar Murat or Mehemed Vizier.”

Still persisted the wife of Strahinya;
“O my Lord! O thou mighty Vlah-Ali!
See'st thou not then (does thy eyesight fail thee?)
He who comes brings no message from Murat!

My husband it is ! the Ban Strahinya !—
I knew him all at once by his forehead ;
I knew under his forehead his dark eyes ;
I knew them, also, his dark moustachios ;
Knew his horse and his greyhound Karaman.—
Take care, my Lord ! Thy head is in danger.”

Hearing this, the snake, mighty Vlah-Ali,
To his feet leapt up lightly and quickly ;
He girdled on a long silken girdle,
And placed safely within it sharp daggers.
His bright sabre he belted on swiftly,
Keeping both his eyes fixed on his black
steed.

Rode slowly up to him Ban Strahinya,
But the Ban spoke not one word of greeting ;
To the Turk said he sharply and roughly :
“ Thou poltron ! Even false to thy own Czar !
Whose cattle and whose flocks hast thou
stolen ?
Whose castle hast thou ransacked and pil-
laged ?

Whose wife sits at thy feet now to serve
thee?

Come, coward! With thy sword shalt thou
answer."

Then the Turk sprang aloft as if snake-stung,
With one stride he laid hand on his black steed,
With one bound he sat firm in his saddle,
And gather'd the silk bridles together.

But for this did not wait Ban Strahinya!
He spurr'd sudden his stout horse against him
And cast his war spear swiftly and surely.
Mad with vengeance attack'd he Vlah-Ali!
The mighty Vlah, quick stretching his long
arm,
Caught and broke the Ban's spear ere it struck
him;
Then he spoke to him laughing and taunting:
"O Strahinya! 'tis thou art the poltron!
Say of what and of whom art thou thinking?
Here are none of thy Shumadia's* women

* Shumadia, forest land, the name of the country lying between Morava and Drina, north of the Kapaonik.

To be frightened away with thy shouting !
Here is only the mighty Vlah-Ali !
He who fears neither Sultan nor Vizier !
As for the myriad soldiers of Murat
To me they seem but ants in the green grass !”

Speaking thus he flung swiftly his stout spear :—
Little failed it to strike Ban Strahinya !—
But the just God was with Ban Strahinya !—
His brave horse was well train'd for the battle ;
As the spear flew the charger knelt quickly,
The spear whizz'd o'er the head of his rider ;
It struck hard on a rock, and was shattered ;
It was shatter'd and fell in three pieces.

The spears lost, the fierce fighters took maces
And so hard hit Strahinya Vlah-Ali
That he fell on the head of his charger ;—
But the just God was with Ban Strahinya !—
His grey horse was trained well for the combat ;
Such a war steed to-day there is nowhere ;
Neither Sultan nor Czar now possess such !
The brave horse moved his head and his
neck so

That he threw the Ban back in his saddle.
The Ban's mace with great force struck Vlah-
Ali,
But the mighty Vlah sat still, unshaken,
Although all the four legs of his war horse
Were buried to the knee in the black earth ;
So hard had struck the mace of Strahinya !
Lost the maces, the knights took their sabres,
Their sharp sabres to finish the conflict ;
But look now on Banovich Strahinya !—
For a whole week two smiths had been working
To fashion and to sharpen his sabre !
Oh, so strong and so sharp was the sabre !—
Vlah-Ali slashed out wild, but Strahinya
Swiftly caught the bright sword on his own
blade—
Caught it and cut it straight in two pieces !
Greatly pleased was the Ban Strahinya !—
On the Vlah he press'd fiercely his charger,
Trying now to cut off his two strong arms,
If the head was at present in safety.—
But it was hero fighting with hero !—
Well the Turk guards his head from the sharp
blade,—

Guards his arms with the stump of his sabre!—
Bit by bit breaks he Strahinya's bright
sword!—

Till at last (their swords worn to the strong
hilts)

Both the fighters flung them far from them,
And, springing with a bound from their
chargers,

They grasped each other fierce by the white
throats;

Two dragons wrestled wildly together,
Fighting there on the top of Mount Golech!
With each other they wrestled till mid-day.

From the mouth of the Turk ran down white
foam,—

White and red was the froth of Strahinya;
Blood trickled down all over his garments.

But at last Ban Strahinya, exhausted,
To his wife said—she sitting there near them—
“O my wife! May God curse thee and kill thee!
Why sittest thou thus still to regard us?
Take rather a sharp piece of my sabre,
And strike hard either me or Vlah-Ali!

Strike whichever thou wilt, but strike swiftly!"
But the Turk, hearing this, spoke out quickly :
" My darling ! Oh, thou wife of Strahinya !
Do not strike me, but strike Ban Strahinya.
No more dear can't thou ever be to him,
He will blame thee for ever and ever !
Blame thee morning, and mid-day, and even-
ing,
Because thou hast been with me and served me !
But to me thou shalt always be dearest !
To the white city, Yedren, I'll take thee ;
Thirty slaves shalt thou have there to serve
thee,
To carry thy long train and thy wide sleeves.
With honey and sugar I will feed thee,
And cover thee with ducats of pure gold ;
From thy head to thy feet with gold ducats ;
Only strike now at once Ban Strahinya ! "
(Tis' easy to cheat women with fair words !)
Then the wife of the Ban sprang up lightly ;
She sought out a sharp piece of his sabre,
And she wrapped it well round in her worked
veil,
For she feared it might cut her white fingers.

Swift she sprang round the still struggling
fighters :

She cared well for the head of Vlah-Ali,
But she struck sharp at her Lord, Strahinya !
She struck him on his helmet and gold
crest ;

The gold crest and white helmet she cut
through.

She slashed slightly the head of Strahinya ;
The red blood ran o'er forehead and eyelids ;
It drizzled in and darkened his two eyes.—
Then fear came over the Ban Strahinya !—
He saw he had been reckless and foolish,
But suddenly a good thought came to him,
And he called on his greyhound, Karaman,
On Karaman well-trained for all hunting.

The Ban called him—twice loudly he called
him ;

Then the true hound sprung swift to his
master,

Swifter still on the wife of Strahinya.

He rushed at her and held her quite firmly.
Before dogs all the women grow fearful ;
The wife of Strahinya feared Karaman,

And screamed loud when he sprang so upon
her;

Screamed louder when he held her, not hurt her.

Swift she cast down the piece of the sabre
And caught hold of the hound by his both ears ;
So struggling they slipt far down the mountain.

Vlah-Ali became anxious about her,—

Was fearful lest some evil befall her,—

And he turned round to look what was with her.

Then Strahinya Ban gathered fresh courage,
And new heart and new strength coming to him,
He thrust the Turk on this side and that side,
Till at last with great force down he threw him !
Flat down, on the stony ground, he threw him.
Fierce fury filled the soul of Strahinya !—

He looked no more about him for weapons ;
With his sharp teeth tore he the Vlah's white
throat,

With his teeth, like a weird wolf, he killed
him !—

Then he sprang up and sharp called “ *Kara-
man !* ”

Loudly again and again he called him

Before the hound would let go the woman.
Once free she sought to flee down the mountain,
And to hide in the camps of the soldiers ;
But Ban Strahinya did not permit her.
With a firm grasp he held her right hand fast,
And so led her close up to his charger ;
Quick he swung himself into the saddle
And drew his faithless wife up behind him.

The Ban rode by byways to Krushevatz ;
Rode up straight to old Youg Bogdan's castle.
And as he rode up the old knight saw him,
And came down, with his nine sons, to meet
him.
They all stretched forth their arms to embrace
him,
And asked about his health and his journey.
Old Youg saw the wide cut in his helmet,
Saw the red blood, too, dripping beneath it.
Then Youg Bogdan burst out in loud weeping ;—
“ Nothing good will come now to our empire !
Nothing good ! since the Sultan has soldiers
Who could wound thus my brave son, Stra-
hinya !

Wound him who in the world had no equal ! ”
And all the nine young Yougovich wonder'd.

Said to them then the brave Ban Strahinya :
“ Old Youg Bogdan, oh, thou my wife's father,
And ye, all ye nine Yougovich brethren,
Be quiet, now, and do not be angry !
Be not overmuch shocked and ashamed ! —
No soldier of the Sultan can wound me.
Whilst I fought the Turk, mighty Vlah-Ali,
Then—hearfather-in-law ! old Youg Bogdan ! —
Then my own wife, my false wife, thy daughter,
Took a piece of my own sword to kill me ;
She struck me out of love for Vlah-Ali ! ”

As a fire ten times fierce flamed Youg Bogdan,
He shoutéd loud to his nine sons hoarsely :
“ Draw quick ! draw all your nine knives and
kill her !
Draw ! and cut in small pieces the serpent ! ”

The nine sons obeyed quick old Youg Bogdan ;
They drew fiercely to cut down their sister ; —
But Strahinya was there to defend her.

He said to the nine brothers Yougovich :
“ Oh, my brothers ! why will you be foolish ?
Against whom do you draw now your short
knives ?
When you have so much longing for bloodshed
Why rode you not with me to Kossovo,
To use there, on the Turks, knives and sabres ?
To show there your friendship and courage ?
If I will’d that my wife lived no longer,
Could I not with my own hand have killed her ?—
As for you, I forbid you to touch her !—
I have given her her life as a present ;
I shall keep her to serve me and cheer me,
To serve me with cool wine will I keep her.”

* * * * *

Old Youg Bogdan spoke truly : “ No equal,
In the wide world, had the Ban Strahinya.”

MUSICH STEPHAN.

Musich Stephan called to his faithful page,
To his vassal the page Väistina :
“Väistina ! Oh, listen my good page !
Whilst I lie down to slumber a little,
Thou can’t eat, and drink too of the cool wine.
But look thou, now and then, through the
casement,
And tell me when the bright moon slopes
westwards.
Wake me up with the first glow of morning
That we ride out betimes to join Lazar !
To go with the Czar down to Kosovo.
Thou canst not have forgotten, my good page,
How fearful was the oath that we made him,
When we swore to meet him on Kosovo.”

Page Väistina did as his lord said ;
He eat bread, and he drank of the cool wine ;

Then he walked out before the white castle,
And looked up to the still and serene sky.
He saw the bright moon slowly sink west-
ward,—
In the east saw the morning star shining ;
High time to bring out bridled the war
steeds !
High time to ride out towards Kossovo,
To the broad plain, to join the Czar Lazar !
Then the true page ran down to the stables,
And quick led forth the two noble chargers ;
He saddled them, and buckled the girths fast.
For his lord one, for himself the other.
This done well, he returned to the castle,
And brought out the shining silken standard.
Twelve gold crosses were on it embroider'd,
And the picture of the good saint, St. John ;
(St. John patron was of Musich Stephan !)
By the wall he set straight up the standard,
Whilst he hurried up into the high tower
To awaken his lord, Musich Stephan.
As the page was just passing the portal
Came to meet him the lady of Musich ;
She fell upon his neck and embraced him :

“ In God’s name ! O my page, Väistina ;
In the names of the High God and St. John !
Till to-day hast thou been our true vassal,—
My brother-in-God art thou henceforward !
I pray thee, waken not my Lord Musich !
I, unhappy one, last night dreamt badly ;
I saw two dove-flights rise from the castle ;
I saw them fly, led on by two falcons,
To the broad field of Kossovo fled they ;
I saw them by the camp of the Sultan
Alighting, but oh ! never more rose they !
Oh, I fear me the dream is an ill one !—
And you all will be killed on Kossovo.”

But the good page Väistina answered :
“ My dear lady ! the wife of Lord Stephan !
To my brave lord I cannot turn traitor,
To my noble lord, who also is thine.
Thou hast not heard with thy own ears, lady,
The fearful oath we made to Czar Lazar ;
Neither heard’st thou the Czar’s solemn curses
On whosoever failed him on Kossovo ! ”

So saying the page entered the hall straight,

And called loud to his lord, Musich Stephan,
"Rise up, my lord! 'Tis high time for start-
ing."

Quickly rose up the brave Musich Stephan!

With cold, clear water washed he his white face,

He put on all his fine knightly garments;
On his thigh girded he his sharp sabre.

But his wife stepped up now and spoke to him :

"O Stephan! I have sad news to tell thee;
I pray thee, don't leave me for Kossovo!

This last night I have dreamt such an ill dream!

A flight of doves flew forth from our fortress,—
Flew straight to the broad plain of Kossovo;—
They fell on the camp of Sultan Murat;
They fell there, but oh! nevermore rose they!
I fear that thou wilt fall in this battle."

To his wife answer'd then Musich Stephan:
"Oh, my dear wife! my dear Lady Yelitza!

The dread oath I took must not be broken,
I dare not break my faith with Czar Lazar!
Were I certain to fall in this battle,
I should go with the army of Lazar!
Should go with the nine brothers Yougovich!—
There is nothing could keep me behind them!—
There's no treasure could pay me such
treason!—

Thou hast not heard with thy ears, Yelitza,
That most terrible oath we have taken!
The oath we made glorious Czar Lazar;
Thou hast not heard the curses the Czar
spoke

On all who should fail him on Kossovo:—
‘To the traitor may nothing e'er prosper!
In his fields may no white wheat e'er ripen!
In his vineyards may the red grape fail him!
May no child e'er grow up in his household!
May no child from his own heart be borne him!
All his life long may evil be with him!’”

When his wife, Lady Yelitza, heard this,
The great tears fell fast over her white cheeks,
And she took leave from Musich full sadly.

Then a goblet of red wine took Musich ;
He lifted it up high "*to God's glory !*"
Then drank "*the honour of the Holy Cross !*"
And to his own "*good speed on the journey.*"

'Twas the last toast he drank in his castle !
He went down and sprang light on his war
steed ;
His silk standard was flung to the four winds ;
To the rolling of drums and the shrill pipes
He rode out, in God's name, to Kosovo.

THE EMPRESS MILITZA BEGS CZAR
LAZAR TO LEAVE WITH HER IN
KRUSHEVATZ ONE OF HER NINE
BROTHERS.

Czar Lazar sat down to the banquet,
Beside him his Empress Militza.
Said to him the Empress Militza :
“ Czar Lazar ! Thou gold crown of Serbia !
To-morrow thou ridest to Kossovo,
Taking with thee thy vassals and Vojvodes,
With me, here at the Court, thou leav’st no one !
O Czar Lazar ! not one man thou leav’st me
To carry a letter to Kossovo,
And to bring back to me here thy answer !—
With thee, too, thou tak’st all my nine
brethren ;
With thee ride out all the nine Yougovich !—
Oh, leave me here but one of my brothers !—
One brother for the sister to swear by ! ”

Mild answered the Serbian Czar Lazar :
“ My Lady ! my Empress ! Militza !
To-morrow, at dawn of the white day,
When the gates of the fort are opened,
Go down to the gates of the castle ;
The army will pass out by standards.
The horsemen will pass with their lances ;
Before them rides Boshko Yougovich,
Bearing proudly the cross of gold banner ;
When he passes give him my blessing ;—
Let him give some other the standard
And stay with thee here in the castle ! ”

On the morrow, at dawn of the morning,
When the gates of the fortress were open'd,
Walked down then the sad Empress Militza.
She stood close by the gates of the castle
When came out the Czar's army by standards.
Came the horsemen, with long battle lances ;
Before them rode the Yougovich Boshko
On his bay horse, himself all in gold cloth ;
The full folds of the flag fell around him,
And, low drooping, half hid his bay charger ;
The golden globe surmounted the standard,

From the gold globe rose up the gold crosses,
From the crosses drooped heavy gold tassels,
Beating time on the shoulders of Boshko.

Then stepped forth the sad Empress Militza ;
She seized swift the bay steed by the bridle,
And flung about the neck of her brother
Her white arms, while she whisper'd him softly :

“ Hear me, my brother ! Boshko Yougovich !
Czar Lazar has made me a gift of thee ;
Thou shalt pass to some other the standard
And remain with me here in Krushevatz,
That *one* brother may rest me to swear by.”

Answer'd proudly the Yougovich Boshko :
“ Go, my sister ! go to the white castle.
As for *me*, oh, *I* would not return there,
Nor give out of my hand the cross standard,
Though the Czar should give to me Krushevatz !

How my comrades would sneer if I did so !
Laugh at the poltron Boshko Yougovich !

Him who dared not ride down to Kossovo !
Him who feared to fight for the Holy Cross !
Fear'd to die for the faith of his fathers ! ”

So saying he rode past her through the gate.
Forth came then the old hero, Youg Bogdan,
And with him seven Yougovich brothers.
One after another did she stop them,
But not one of the seven would hear her.

Came past shortly the Yougovich Voyin,
Leading forth all the Czar Lazar's war steeds.
With a cloth of gold clothed was each charger.
Militza laid her hand on his war horse,—
She clasped gently the neck of her brother
With her white arms, and said to him softly :
“ O my dear brother Yougovich Voyin !
Czar Lazar has presented thee to me,
And through me he has sent thee his blessing ;
Thou shalt give up the charge of his war
steeds,
And shall rest with me here in Krushevatz.”

But quick answer'd her Yougovich Voyin :

“ Go, my sister, go to the white castle !
As for *me*, oh, I would not return there,
Nor give up now the charge of the war steeds,
Were I certain to fall on Kossovo.
I shall go, my sister, to Kossovo,
To shed my best blood for the Holy Cross,
And to die for my faith with my brothers.”

And he pushed past her his horse through the
gate.

When the Empress Militza saw this
She sank down on the cold stone pavement,
She sank down, and lay there unconscious.

Then rode out the glorious Czar Lazar,
Near him rode the Obilich Milosh,
Near him rode also Vuk Brankovich,
Behind them came all the Czar's army.
When the Czar saw Empress Militza
Down his cheeks rolled fast the large tear-
drops,
And he glanced in trouble about him.
Then called he Golubin, the good page :
“ Here, Golubin, faithful and trusty,

Get down from thy white swanlike charger !
Raise gently the Empress Militza,
Bear her in thy arms to the castle ;
As for me, by God ! I excuse thee ;
Come not to the field of Kossovo,
But remain here in the white castle."

When the good page Golubin heard this
The large tears ran over his white cheeks ;
But he got down quick from his charger
And lifted up gently the Empress ;
He bore her up safe to her high tower ;
But his heart would not let him rest there,
He *must* to the Kossovo battle.

So down he returned to his war steed
And rode to the Czar on Kossovo.

CZAR LAZAR CHOOSES THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM.

The bold falcon, the grey bird, was flying
From the holy city Jerusalem ;
He was carrying the bird, the swallow.

But it was not the falcon, the grey bird,
And he carried not the bird, the swallow ;
It was truly the holy saint, Elias,
With a message from the mother of God
To Lazar, the good Czar, on Kosovo.

On the knee of the Czar the bird dropp'd it,
And aloud to the Czar spoke the letter:

“ Oh, Lazar, thou brave son of a brave race,
Of the two kingdoms which hast thou chosen ?
Would'st thou rather the heavenly kingdom ?
Or choosest thou, Czar Lazar, the earthly ?—
If the kingdom of earth should thy choice be,

Saddle war steed and tighten the silk girths.
Let thy brave knights swift belt on their
bright swords;
Fall on the Turks! Fall sudden as storm-
wind!
Then the whole Turkish army shall perish.
If thou choosest the heavenly kingdom,
Raise a church on the plain of Kossovo.
Not of marble or stone shalt thou make it,
But of pure silk and cloth of fine scarlet.
Let thy soldiers commune and make ready,
For the whole of thy army shall perish!"

When Czar Lazar, the Serbian Head, heard this
All sorts of strange visions stole over him.
"Oh, dear God, which to choose? Which
decide for?—
Shall I choose now the heavenly kingdom?—
Is it wise to decide for the earthly?—
All the kingdoms of earth are but fleeting,
And the kingdoms of heaven everlasting."

So the Czar chose the heavenly kingdom,
And he raised up a church on Kossovo.

Not of marble nor stone did he make it,
But of fine silk and cloth of bright scarlet.
Then the Patriarch of Serbia call'd he,
He called twelve holy bishops besides him,
To give to his soldiers communion,
And for the last great battle prepare them.

IVAN'S RETURN FROM THE TURKISH CAMP.

From the Turks came back Kosanchich Ivan ;
From far off saw him Obilich Milosh,
And swift he went straightway to meet him.

“ My brother-in-God, Kosanchich Ivan,
Com’st thou back in good health and in safety ?
Hast looked well through the Turkish encamp-
ments ?
Has the Sultan so mighty an army ?—
Have we any fair chance to defeat them ?—
Think’st thou there is good hope that we con-
quer ? ”

Ivan Kosanchich answered him sadly :
“ Oh, my dear brother, Obilich Milosh,
I have been through the Turkish encampments,
Mighty, mighty indeed is their army !—
Were all of our men changed into salt now,

All the salt would not salt them one dinner !
Fifteen full days it took to pass through them ;
Yet I saw not them all nor could count them,
So many are the camps of Czar Murat !

From the dry Maple to far Sazleya,
From the bridge to the fortress of Zvechan,
From fortress Zvechan, my brother, to Chechan,
And from there to the top of the mountain,—
All that ground with encampments is cover'd !
Horse by horse, man by man, do they stand
there !

Their tall lances look out like thick forests ;
The silk standards float cloud-like above
them ;
The white tents in the sun gleam like snow-
fields.

Were the rain to pour down in full torrents,
Not one drop would arrive on the bare earth !
On the field of Mazgit camps the Sultan ;
He holds the rivers Lab and Sitnitza.”

Yet one question asked Vojvode Milosh :
“ Tell me, my dear brother-in-God, Ivan,
How and where stands the tent of the Sultan ?

Could I reach it unseen by his soldiers?
Kill him there in the midst of his army?
Could I there put my foot on his proud neck?"

Answer'd quickly the Kosanchich Ivan :
"What folly art thou speaking, my brother?—
Know'st thou not that the tent of the Sultan
Stands in the very midst of the wide camp?
If thou had'st the strong wings of the falcon,
And could'st thou fall straight down from the
clear sky,
Thy wings would not be able to save thee!"

Spoke Obilich to Kosanchich Ivan :
"Oh, Ivan, thou who art my dear brother
(Not brother in blood, but as dear to me),
Tell not this evil news to Czar Lazar.
It may be that our Czar would grow anxious,
And that would but dishearten our soldiers.
Say thou to Czar Lazar what I tell thee :
That the army of Murat is mighty,
But that still we are able to meet them,
And we hope to be able to conquer;
For it is not an army of tried men,

But made chiefly of old priests and pilgrims,
Of weak tradesmen and youthful shop-
keepers,
Of men who till now never saw battle,
But who seek in the army their living.
Say, that were it a real Turkish army
The men-at-arms are most of them sickly,
And the seeming strong horses are foun-
der'd.—
Brother Ivan, say this to Czar Lazar!"

While thus spoke the knight, longing for battle,
Vuk Brankovich near'd softly Czar Lazar
And asked him: "Saw'st thou Obilich
Milosh?—
How he hurried to Kosanchich Ivan?—
How earnest was their converse and lively?—
Good faith! Kosanchich brings from the
Sultan
The price paid to Milosh for his treason!"

THE MAIDEN OF KOSSOVO.

The army of Lazar took communion
By the beautiful church, Samodreja ;
Thirty monks for a full week were serving,
And the sacrament took every soldier.

Last of all came three valiant Vojvodes ;
Of the three first came Obilich Milosh,
After him, his brother-in-God, Ivan,
Then, lastly, came Milan of Toplitz.

As the Obilich Milosh was walking—
Very handsome was Obilich Milosh !—
His steel scabbard struck clangng the pave-
ment ;
On his head he wore a silken kalpak
With a tall plume and a crest of pure gold ;
He wore also a long chain of gold links,
And round his neck was a fine silken kerchief.
Slowly strode he on, looking about him,

And the maiden of Kossovo saw he,
As she stood still admiring his beauty;
Then he took his gold chain from his shoulders,
And gave it, with these words, to the maiden :

“Take, O maiden ! this long chain of gold
links ;
Take it that you may never forget me !
Remember me by my chain and my name.
It may be that I shortly shall perish !
I may fall with our valiant Czar’s army ;
But do thou pray to God, oh, my dear life,
That I may come back safe from the battle !
If I come back great luck shall come to thee !
I will take thee as wife for my brother,
My brother-in-God, Toplitzia Milan,
Who has called me his brother in God’s name ;
In the names of the High God and St. John !—
And I will be thy Koom* at the wedding !”

After him strode on Kosanchich Ivan—
A handsome knight, too, was the Kosanchich !—

* *Koom*, bridesman, best man,

As he walked his sword struck the stones
clanging;
On his head wore he a silken kalpak,
And on it a tall plume in a gold clasp;
Round his neck wore he a bright silken kerchief,
And a ring of fine gold on his finger.

Ivan looked round and noticed the maiden;
From his finger he took off the gold ring,
Took it off, and presented it to her.
"Take, maiden! oh, take from me this gold
ring!
Take it that thou may'st never forget me;
Remember me by my ring and by my name.
It may be I shall die in a short time,
Shall be slain with my valiant Czar's soldiers;
But do thou pray to God, O my dear soul,
That He bring me safe back from the
battle!
Then great good luck indeed shall come to
thee!
I will take thee as wife for my Milan,
My brother-in-God, Toplitzia Milan;
For him who as brother-in-God chose me,

In the name of the High God and St. John ;
And I will be, O maiden ! thy *dever* ! ” *

After Kosanchich came Toplitz Milan—
Oh, a handsome knight, also, was Milan !—
As he strode on his sword struck the pavement,
And the fine steel rung loud on the hard
stones.

On his head he wore, too, a silk *kalpak*,
And on it a tall plume and gold buckle.
Round his neck hung a fine chain of gold links,
He wore also a kerchief of pure silk ;
On his hands he wore gloves made of gold
thread.

Milan looked round and noticed the maiden ;
Then he drew from one hand the gold gauntlet,
Drew it off and presented it to her.

- “Take, O maiden ! this glove made of gold
thread !
Take it that thou may’st never forget me

* *Dever*, bride leader ; he who gives away the bride.

Remember me by my glove and my name !
I go forth soon with our good Czar's army,
And perchance I shall fall in the battle ;
But do thou pray to God, O my dear soul !
That I may come back safe from the conflict.
Then, maiden ! great good luck will come to
thee ;
I will take thee to me for my true wife ! ”

So passed they on, the three valiant Vojvodes.
After them looked the Kossovo maiden,
With a heart ice-cold, and eyes full of tears.

THE BANQUET BEFORE BATILE.

The Serbian Czar Lazar gave a banquet
In his camp on the plain of Kossovo ;
All his nobles had place at the table,
All the great chiefs and all the great Vojvodes.

On his right hand he placed old Youg Bogdan,
And next him his nine sons, the Yougovich.
The Czar on his left placed Vuk Brankovich,
And the other lords, each as his rank was ;
At the foot sat the Obilich Milosh,
And, beside him, two valiant Vojvodes—
Kosanchich and Milan of Toplitz.

Czar Lazar lifted high his gold goblet,
And loudly spoke to the Serbian nobles :
“ To whom ought I to drink now the first
toast ?
If I drink to the oldest among you,
I must drink my wife’s father, Youg Bogdan ;

If I toast the most nobly descended,
I drink to the health of Vuk Brankovich ;
If I toast those my heart holds the dearest,
I must drink the nine brothers Yougovich,
The brothers of my Empress Militza ;
If I toast the most handsome among you,
I must drink to the Kosanchich Ivan ;
And if I toast the knight most accomplished,
I must drink to Milan of Toplitz ;
But if I wish to toast now the bravest,
I must drink to the Obilich Milosh !

“ In good sooth to none else will I drink it !—
—I drink to thy health, Obilich Milosh ;
Thou most loyal, and yet most disloyal !—
At first loyal, and then so disloyal !—
To-morrow thou thinkest to betray me—
To go over thyself to Czar Murat !—

“ I drink to thee ! Do not refuse my toast !—
Drink the wine, and keep the gold goblet ;—
Keep it that thou shouldst never forget me ! ”

Up sprang flame-like then Obilich Milosh,

And spoke, bowing low down to the bare earth :
“ I thank thee, O glorious Czar Lazar !
I thank thee for the grace thou hast done me !
I thank thee, Czar, for toast and for goblet—
But for thy speech, Czar Lazar, I thank not !—
So true I shall die by my loyalty,
So true have I never been disloyal !
Never was I, and never I can be !—
To-morrow, in the Kossovo battle,
For the Christian faith fighting, I perish ;
But the traitor sits there close beside thee !
In the shade of thy royal robe sits he,
And drinks there, in sly silence, the cool wine !

“ As for *thee*, accursed one ! Vuk Brankovich !
*To-morrow is the day of St. Vidov !—**
On the Kossovo plain we shall all see
Who is loyal, and who is the traitor.

“ As for me, I swear now by my great God,

* Vidov, from *Vid*, sight or seeing. In Catholic and Greek calendars, on the 15th June falls the day of St. Vitus, called by Serbians Vidov-dan, of which the literal meaning is “ the day of seeing.” Milosh therefore plays with the words in his answer : “ To-morrow, on the day of seeing, we shall see,” &c., &c.

I shall go to-morrow to Kossovo !
I shall cut down the Turkish Czar, Murat !
Set my foot on the neck of the Sultan !—

“ And if God and my good luck permit me
That I come back alive to Krushevatz,
O Vuk Brankovich ! there will I take thee !
I will bind thee fast to my battle-spear,
As the women bind flax on their spindles !—
I will bring thee straight back to Kossovo ! ”

So speaking he strode out from the Czar’s tent,
And his two brothers-in-God went out with
him ;
All the three went out upon Kossovo.

MILOSH OBILICH KILLS SULTAN MURAT.

Not yet in the east glimmer'd the red dawn,
When direct to the camp of the Sultan
Rode boldly the three Serbian Vojvodes,
Milosh, Ivan, and Toplitzia Milan.

Then the Turks said in haste to the Sultan :
“ Mighty Murat ! right to thy royal tent
Ride the three bravest Vojvodes of Serbia,—
The three that we dread most in the battle.”

Straight the Sultan commanded his soldiers
To bring the valiant Vojvodes before him ;
And together his Ulemahs called he,
To consult them, and hear what they counsel.
“ These giaurs must have tidings to tell me ;
Should I hold hand or foot for their homage ? ”
Then the Ulemahs said to the Sultan :

“O Sultan! not thy hand to pollution!—
Stain and shame it would be to thy station!—
Thy foot to kiss is for them much honour.
At thy feet may thegiaurs lie ever! ”

Up rode now the three Serbian Vojvodes;
Pages ran out to hold them their horses,
But Milosh refused to trust his to them.
Said Obilich to Kosanchich Ivan :
“ My brother-in-God, hold thou my charger,
Till I come from the tent of the Sultan ; ”
And he entered, alone, in the royal tent.

Then the Sultan stretched his right foot forward,
And looking full in the face of Milosh,
He said : “ Slowly! thou servant of Lazar!
Trample not on my carpets so fiercely!
Kiss first of all my boot and my gold spur.”

Like a fire flamed up Obilich Milosh,
He sprang swift on the Sultan and seized
him ;—
By the right foot he caught him, and held him,

He stabbed him with his gold-handled dagger!
Murat fell down and Milosh trod on him!—
Swung his sabre and cut down the viziers,
Then he rushed from the tent like a whirlwind,
And leapt up, with one bound, on his war-horse.

Mad with fury the Sultan's guards shouted:
“The Sultan is wounded, but he yet lives,—
Milosh stabbed him, but he did not kill him;”
And furiously they closed round the Vojvodes.
Then sounded a sharp clashing of sabres,—
Lightning swift slashed the Serbians about
them,—
With each sword sweep fell down on the green
grass
Turkish heads like ripe corn falls in harvest.
Where Milan of Toplitz was fighting
A free carriage road kept he around him,
Where was fighting the Kosanchich Ivan,
The breadth of two carriage roads kept he free.

All the great Turkish army was rallied
To close up and to cut down three Serbians!—
So valiantly fought those three Vojvodes!

But ere long shouted Milan of Toplitz :
“ Revenge me, O, my Obilich Milosh,
For I fall now to-day on Kossovo ! ”

Milosh Obilich answered him sadly :
“ May God keep thee, my brother, my Milan !
It will not be long ere I follow thee.”

Then a cry came from Kosanchich Ivan :
“ Farewell, brother ! I die on Kossovo ;
Do not fail to revenge me, my brother ! ”

And to him answer'd Obilich softly :
“ Ah ! my good brother ! Kosanchich Ivan,
I also shall die now on Kossovo,
But it is no grief to die gloriously.”

Still he spurr'd on his weary steed fiercely.
Madder grew he and madder his charger ;
The green grass all around them was blood-
dyed !
Crimson dyed it was with Turkish life blood !

Not far was he from river Sitnitz,

That stream crossed he felt sure there was safety;

But evil came to him unexpected.

On a rock sat an old woman crying,

“ Oh, you blind Turks! where now is your eyesight?

See you not that the Milosh wears armour?

That both he and his war horse are cuirass'd?

Throw before him your bossed shields and sabres!

Throw your sharp sabres under his steed's feet!”

Ere she finished the Turks had obeyed her,
Had thrown down in a great heap their bucklers,

In the way of the war steed flung sabres,
And at length fell, exhausted, the charger.

But Obilich still grasped firm his war spear,
As the Turks pressed around he sprang o'er them;

But the grey falcon had lost his strong wings!
Lost his two faithful friends and his brave horse.

Milosh felt that his strength was fast failing,
And he cried out aloud as he fought still :
“ Where art thou, oh, my lord ! Oh, Czar
Lazar ?

Wherefore com’st thou not now to my succour ?
It will soon be too late, Czar, to help me.”

In the Serbian camp heard was the shouting.
When he heard it said Vuk Brankovich scorn-
ful,

“ Ah ! Milosh ! thou so nobly descended,
Thou hast war with the Turks to thy sorrow,
But it was thou who *would’st* have war with
them,

To-day thou payest me well for my lost teeth.”

Out came, too, the Czar Lazar and listen’d ;
“ Be still, Vuk ! I heard sure some one shout-
ing,

I thought that I heard Obilich Milosh.—
I fear much he rode forth for some folly ;
Mount quick, my lords ! mount quick ! and
ride forward ! ”

THE BATTLE OF KOSSOVO.

Czar Lazar had just mounted his war horse,
When to him in hot haste came his heralds,
With the news : “ The Turks march on Kos-
sovo ! ”

The Czar prayed God and gave sign for battle.

Musich Stephan first led forth his soldiers ;
He, alone, fought three pashas and killed
them !

When the fourth pasha came with his forces
Fell down, slain, the Vojvode Musich Stephan,
And with him fell his page, Väistina ;
With him fell too his twelve thousand warriors.

Then old Youg Bogdan led out his army,
With him were his nine sons, the Yougovich ;
Nine brothers, fearless, like nine grey falcons,
Each brother led a force of nine thousand,

But old Youg led twelve thousand brave warriors.

They fought against seven Turkish pashas,
All the seven they beat back and conquer'd,
When the eighth pasha came up Youg Bogdan

Fell fighting, and with him fell his soldiers ;
All his nine sons, the Yougovich, fell too,
And with them fell the whole of their army.
Then advanced the three valiant Vojvodes ;
(Each standard thirty thousand men led on !)
The first of them was Omolya Givko,
The second was Ivan of Kuchaina,
And the third was Branichevatz Petar.

Close behind them came the Ban Uglesha,
And with him went the Vojvode Goyko,
And with these two went the King Vukashin

Each of them led warriors thirty thousand.

With the Turks fought they all long and bravely !

Each defeated eight pashas, and killed them,—

Killed eight pashas with all their great armies !

The ninth pasha killed two valiant Vojvodes,
And fearful he wounded King Vukashin,
He trod the King down under his war horse ;
And so all this brave army was conquered.

Forward led now his soldiers Duke Stephan ;*
The Duke brought a strong force to the battle,
Brought of warriors alone sixty thousand.
Nine pashas he fought with and defeated ;
A tenth came, and he, too, had been routed
If the brave Duke himself had not fallen ;
With Stephan sank the strength of his soldiers
So the Duke's army, also, was vanquish'd.

Then led forth his soldiers Ban Strahinya,
Sixty thousand men followed his standards,
And furiously they fought with the fierce
Turks.

A knight first among knights was Strahinya !
With a single swift stroke of his sharp sword
Twenty Turkish heads roll'd on the red earth !

* A poetical license, Duke Stephan living some sixty years later.

Nine pashas he fought with and defeated ;
When the tenth pasha came forward to meet
him,
Fighting still fell the brave Ban Strahinya !
With him fell, too, the strength of his soldiers.

Then Czar Lazar led onward his forces :
Of warriors a great number were with him ;
Seventy-seven thousand train'd soldiers !
The Turks hardly dared look at his army,
Much less, then, had they dared to fight with
them,
Most surely must Czar Lazar have conquered,
But ill-luck goes so often with good-luck.—
May the just God punish Vuk Brankovich !—
Twice traitor he turned out on Kossovo !—
To his Czar false, and to his wife's father.
From the battle he led forth twelve thousand,
Twelve thousand cuirassiers fiery and fear-
less !—
Curses light on the mother who bore him !—
Cursed for ever his house and his children !—
Cursed be all of his blood and his kindred !—
Then the Turks attacked bold the Czar's army ;

The whole army of Lazar was routed !
With the good Czar fell also his soldiers,
Seventy-seven thousand brave Serbians ;
Each man of them was honest and valiant ;
Each man of them was free to approach God.
—The Turks took up the corpse of Czar Lazar,
And carried it with haste to the Sultan,
To the Sultan who slowly was dying.
To the Sultan spoke his son, Bayazeth :
“ O my Lord ! O Murat ! Mighty Sultan !
See here lies slain the Serbian Czar Lazar !—
O my Lord ! thou at least hast outlived him,
But since it is most sure thou art dying,
Give to us, O my Lord ! thy last orders ! ”

To his son said then Murat the Sultan :
“ Bury Milosh’s body beside me,
But lay beneath my feet the Czar Lazar,
That the Raya be ever thy vassals ! ”

Then spoke out the bold Obilich Milosh
(Lying bound there in sight of the Sultan) :
“ O Murat ! Mighty Sultan and soldier ;
I see that my Czar, Lazar, lies slain there ! ”

Thou art dying ! I also am death doom'd.
I beseech thee, O Murat ! great Sultan !
Let not thus our dead bodies be buried.
Let the two Czars lie in death side by side !—
Let me lie at the feet of Czar Lazar !
His true knight was I ever in this world,
His true vassal I would be in that one.”

When the brave Murat, that great Sultan,
 heard this,
With his last gasping breath breathed he
 faintly :
“ So be it, O Bayazeth, my dear son !
Let us lie as said Obilich Milosh.”

EMPRESS MILITZA HEARS OF THE DEATH OF CZAR LAZAR.

Out walking was the Empress Militza,
'Neath the walls of the Krushevatz fortress ;
With the Empress were two of her daughters,
Vookossava and beautiful Mara.

Up rode to her Vladeta, the Vojvode ;
Pale the Vojvode and weary his war steed,
Both were cover'd with sweat and with foam
 flakes.

Said to him then the Empress Militza :
“ Tell me quickly, O Vojvode of Lazar !
Why hast thou overridden thy charger ?
Com'st thou straight from the field of Kossovo ?
Hast thou seen there our glorious Czar Lazar ?
Czar Lazar who is both my lord and thine ? ”

Answered sad Vladeta, the Vojvode :
“ Alas, O my dear Empress Militza !
I have ridden straight here from Kossovo,

But, alas ! I saw not there Czar Lazar !
I saw only his silver-grey charger !
The Turks were chasing it on Kossovo.
I fear much that our good Czar has fallen."

When the Empress Militza heard these words,
Over her white cheeks the great tears rolled
 swiftly ;
But she spoke yet again to the Vojvode :—

" Tell me truly, O Czar Lazar's Vojvode !
Saw'st thou not the nine brothers Yougovich ?
Saw'st thou not there my father, Youg
 Bogdan ? "

Answer'd sadly Vladeta, the Vojvode :
" I rode, indeed, all over Kossovo,
And I saw the nine brothers Yougovich ;
I saw also there the old Youg Bogdan !
But bloodstain'd were their arms to the
 shoulders,
And bloodstain'd were their swords to the sword
 hilts !
But their arms were already grown weary
With cutting down Turks upon Kossovo."

Spoke again to him Empress Militza :
“ Stay a little, O Vojvode of Lazar ;
Stay !—Saw’st thou not also on Kossova,
Vuk Brankovich and Obilich Milosh ? ”

Then answer’d her Vladeta, the Vojvode :
“ ‘Tis true when I rode over Kossovo,
I saw there the brave Obilich Milosh.
He stood still on the plain of Kossovo,
Stood upright and leant proud on his war
spear :
But the spear-head already was broken,
And I fear me by this he has fallen.

“ But I saw not there the Vuk Brankovich !—
Saw him not—may the sun never see him !—
Betrayed has he our glorious Czar Lazar,
Betrayed Lazar who was thy lord and mine ! ”

Ere he ceased rode up the page Milutin ;
His right arm in his left hand he carried ;
From seventeen wide wounds flowed the red
blood,
And his charger was covered with bloodstains.

Sad spake to him the Empress Militza :
“Why com’st thou, O Milutin, my good page ?—
Hast thou left Czar Lazar on Kossovo ?”

But the good page Milutin spoke faintly :
“Help me down from my saddle, my lady,
Bathe my face and my head with cool water !
Bring me quickly a few drops of red wine,
Lest my terrible wounds overpower me.”

The Empress help’d him down from his saddle;
She bath’d gently his face in cool water !
She gave him, too, red wine to refresh him.
When the page had recover’d a little
Asked him softly the Empress Militza :
“O, page, what has happen’d on Kossovo ?—
Where has fallen our glorious Czar Lazar ?—
Where has fallen my father, Youg Bogdan ?—
Where fell my nine brothers, the Yougovitch ?—
Where has fallen bold Milosh, the Vojvode ?—
Where has fallen the brave Ban Strahinya ?—
What did—tell me truly—Vuk Brankovich ?”

To the Empress the page answered sadly :
“All rest there, my lady—on Kossovo !—

Where the glorious Czar Lazar has fallen
Many lances lie all shatter'd around him.
Broken lances of Turks and of Vojvodes !
Many more lances of Serbs than of Turks !
Broken, lady, in defence of their lord,
In defence of our glorious Czar Lazar !
Thy father, old Youg Bogdan, my lady,
Fell fighting where the battle was fiercest ;
Fell together eight brothers Yougovich,
Fell because brother would not leave brother,
So all the eight brothers have fallen ;
But the brave Boshko Yougovich lives still,
His cross standard flies over Kossovo !
He drives the scared Turks sheeplike before
him !
Chases them as grey falcons chase white
doves !—
The red blood runs knee-high on the drench'd
earth
Where the brave Ban Strahinya has fallen.

“ Obilich Milosh, my lady, has fallen
By the Sitnitza, by the cold river ;
Heap'd up bodies of Turks lie around him !—

Milosh kill'd mighty Murat, the Sultan,
He killed, also, of Turks twelve thousands—
Ever bless'd be the mother who bore him !
He has left to the Serbians a glory
To be sung of for ever and ever !
And his name shall be cherish'd among them
As long as green grass grows on Kossovo !

“ As for Vuk ! Oh, don't ask of the cursed one !
May the earth cast his bones from her bosom !
He has put out the glory of Serbia—
He betray'd Czar Lazar on Kossovo ! ”

VOJVODE RADICH.

A valiant Vojvode was Vojvode Radich,
The noble Vojvode Radich of Bosnia;
He rode from his castle to Kossovo,
Lest Czar Lazar should hold him a traitor.

The white dawn was still chasing the black
night
When he came with his men on Kossovo,
Yet they found a young girl there before
them;
In her hands she held two vases of gold,
Both golden ones but both of them empty!
Beneath one arm a kalpak she carried,
A fine kalpak of beautiful white silk.
Above the silk kalpak rose tall plumes,
In a setting of silver the plumes stood,
In the middle a chain of gold bound them,
And their tips were adorned with pearl tassels.

When the knight saw this kalpak he stopp'd
her:

“ May God help thee, my dear little sister !
What fight hast thou been at ? what great
battle ?—

Where found'st thou that fine kalpak of white
silk ?—

Then, trembling, the young girl sadly
answered :

“ May God keep thee, O Czar Lazar's Vojvode !—
I have been at no battle, no combat ;
But with the dawn my mother aroused me
To fetch for her fresh Sitnitz water.

When I came to the bank of the river,
Oh ! I found it all muddy and troubled !—
Its waters were filled up with dead horses,—
Half stopped up by slain horses and soldiers !
In the stream floated hundreds of turbans,
Hundreds of Serbian kalpaks of white silk !
By the bank floated closely this kalpak !
In the water I stepp'd and I caught it ;
I have at home a handsome young brother,
And to him will I give the silk kalpak,

But for me will I keep the fine white plume,
Because, being so young, I like feathers."

Said to her then the brave Vojvode Radich :
" Let me look at that kalpak, my sister !
Give it me in mine own hand to see it !
I must see what proud head it has cover'd.
May I never know peace in the next world
If I give it not back to you truly ! "

Then the girl gave to him the silk kalpak ;
But the moment he looked at it closely
He knew well what proud head it had
cover'd !—
Down his pale cheeks the tears rushed in tor-
rents,
And he struck on his knee in wild sorrow ;
On his knee tore the fine cloth of scarlet ;
On his right sleeve the gold clasp was shatter'd.

" Woe be to me ! both here and hereafter !
Woe be to me for ever ! Oh, dear God !
Upon me the dread curse has descended !

The dread curse of our glorious Czar Lazar !
The terrible curse of my royal lord !
Too late am I come upon Kossovo !“
To the girl gave he back the silk kalpak,
And then, thrusting his hand in his girdle,
He took from it three shining gold ducats,
And gave them with these words to the maiden :
“ Take these ducats, my dear little sister,
That when I die thou may'st not forget me.”

Then quick aside turn'd the Vojvode Radich,
He drew swift his sharp knife from his girdle,
And, striking, sheath'd it deep in his bosom.

Late came he, yet fell he on Kossovo.

THE MAIDEN OF KOSVOO AFTER THE BATTLE.

The maiden of Kosovo rose early
On the Sabbath morn, sooner than sunrise ;
From her round arms she turn'd back the
white sleeves,
Turn'd them backward above the white elbows.
On her shoulders a bag was with white
bread,—
And in her hands were two golden vessels,
One vessel was fresh filled with cool water,
The other to the brim was with red wine.

She went straight to the Plain of Kosovo,
And sadly walked over the battle-field
Where the glorious Czar Lazar had fallen.
In the blood-pools she turned round the heroes,
And if she found still one of them breathing
She bathed him gently with clear cold water ;

As sacrament she gave him the red wine,
And fed him with small crumbs of the white
bread.

In her wanderings she came, God guided,
To the brave young knight, Orlovich Pavlo ;
He who carried the Czar Lazar's standard.
She found him yet alive, and still conscious,
Though the right arm was slash'd from the
shoulder,
And the left leg cut off from the knee-joint ;
Yet alive, though his ribs all were broken,
And his lungs were laid bare to the daylight !

She drew him gently forth from a blood-lake,
She bathed him softly with clear, cold water ;
Then she gave him to drink of the red wine,
And fed him with small crumbs of the white
bread.

When his heart beatings grew somewhat
stronger
Said brave Orlovich faint to the maiden :
“ My sister, then maiden of Kosovo,

Tell me what is the dire need which drives thee
To move brave men in midst of their life-blood ?
Whom seekest thou, so young, in this red field ?
A brother ? Or the son of a brother ?—
Or is it thy old father thou seekest ? ”

Then the maiden of Kossovo answered :
“ Dear brother ! dear thou art, though a
stranger !

I am seeking here none of my kindred ;
Neither brother nor son of a brother ;—
I seek not even my own old father !
To thee it must be known, O strange Vojvode,
That all the Czar’s men took communion
In the beautiful church Samodreja ;
The whole army took there communion.

“ Last of all came three valiant Vojvodes,
Obilich Milosh, Kosanchich Ivan,
And the third one, Milan of Toplitz.
Three noble Vojvodes ! three of the noblest !
They never had their equals in this world !
When they walk’d their swords rung on the
pavement.

On their heads they wore kalpaks of pure silk,
Round their shoulders hung long chains of
gold links,
On their necks they wore kerchiefs of silk
cloth ;
They wore also gold rings on their fingers.

“ When the Obilich Milosh passed by me,
He gave me for a present his gold chain ;
When the Kosanchich Ivan passed by me,
He gave me for a present his gold ring ;
But when Milan of Toplitz passed by,
He gave to me his fine glove of gold thread ;
And he marked me thereby for his true love.
These seek I to-day on the battle-field.”

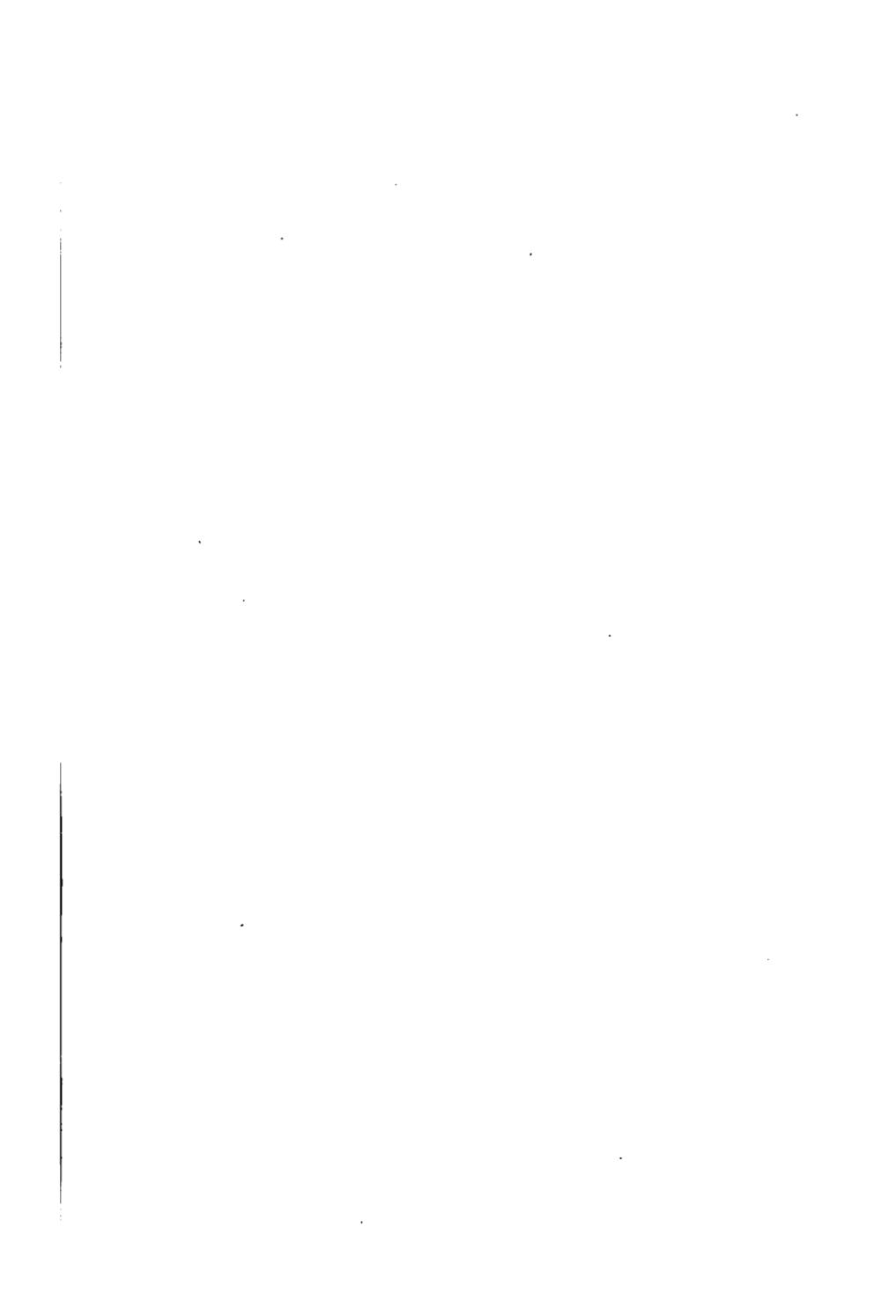
Said again to her Orlovich Pavlo :
“ My dear sister, maiden of Kosovo,
Dost thou not see there those broken war
spears ?
The last life-blood of heroes has flowed there !
Flowed high up as the stirrups of war steeds !
It has reached to the belts of the footmen !

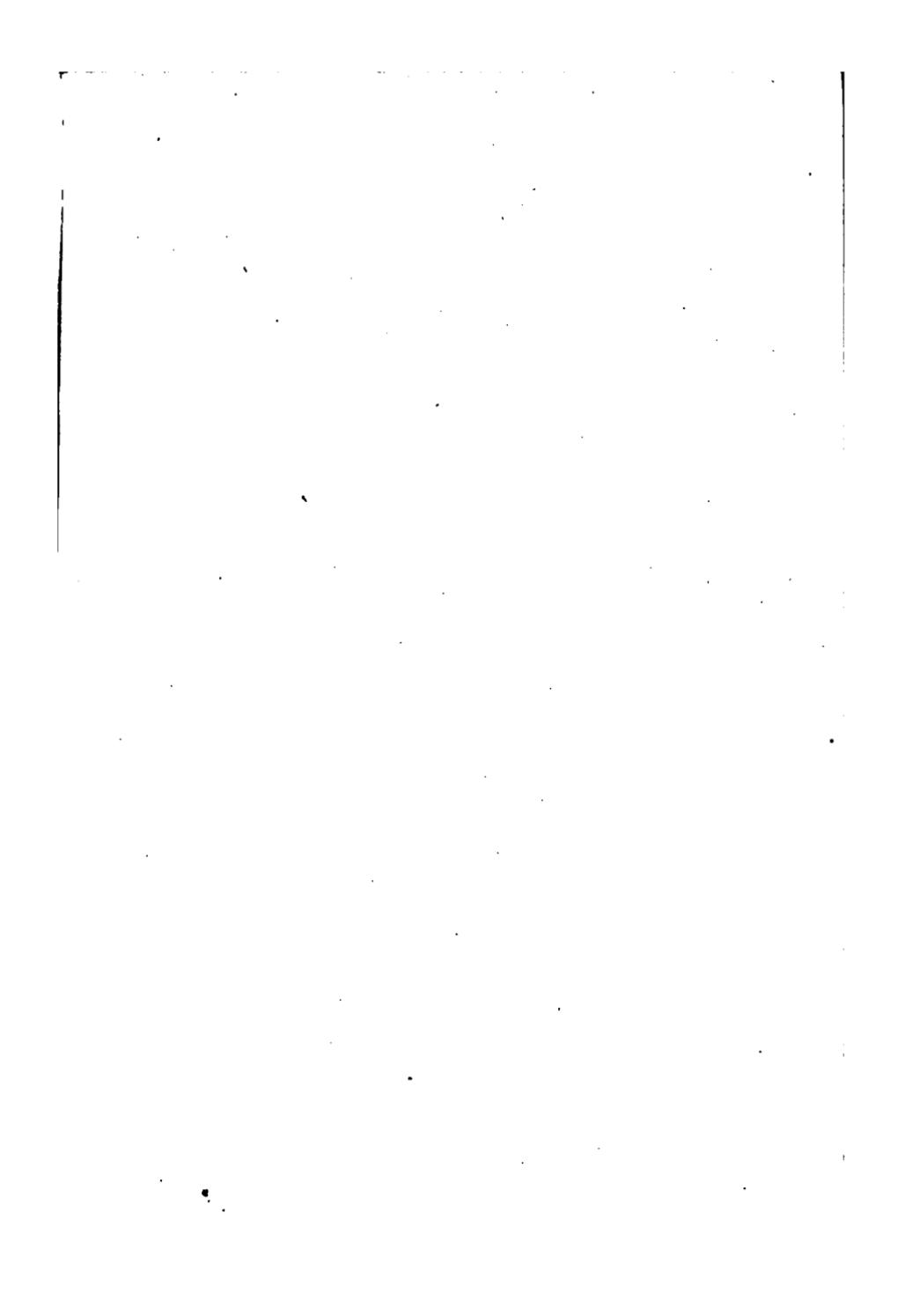
It is *there* thy three heroes have fallen !
But go back to thy white house, my sister !
Stain not thus thy white skirts and thy white
sleeves."

When the maiden of Kossovo heard him,
The great tears fell fast over her white cheeks.

She went back to the house of her father ;
Wildly weeping she went back, and wailing.
" Woe to me ! What ill-luck has befallen
me !—

Oh, were I but to touch the green pine tree,
The green tree at my sad touch would wither."









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